















# Browning

## Study Programmes

By

Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke

“’Tis the poet speaks :

But if I, too, should try and speak at times,  
Leading your love to where my love, perchance,  
Climbed earlier, found a nest before you knew —  
Why, bear with the poor climber, for love’s sake !”

*Balaustion’s Adventure*, lines 343-347.



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## Preface

THERE are now, perhaps always will be, two camps in which many of the readers of poetry intrench themselves. One hedges itself about with walls of opposition to the study of poetry, maintaining that the poet is his own best interpreter. The other combats the opposition, by slow siege as it were, not claiming, indeed, that the poet is not his own best interpreter, but contending constantly that other means of approach to him sorely need to be employed.

The writers of this book, intended to be a contribution toward the building up of poetic appreciation, think it only fair to confess that they do not belong, as active combatants, to either of these hostile camps, for the simple reason that they see no sufficient cause for warfare. If neither camp would attempt to coerce the other, each could the more wisely follow its own bent, or — it is barely possible — find a firm ground of reconciliation.

In the first camp many of the true lovers of poetry rally, whose æsthetic appreciation is spontaneous, and whose delight in verse as an art

is inborn; in the second, many of the lovers of poetry, for the sake of what it illumines ethically or historically, are gathered. And with these who care supremely for poetry as an art and for its appreciation as an inborn sense; and with those who care for the ethical and historical implications of poetry and who hold, moreover, that the conscious cultivation of the instinctive sense of verse as an art pays because it reveals new beauty, gives deeper pleasure, — the writers confess, once more, that they have no quarrel. Rather do they feel with the one set of disputants the closest bonds of kinship, and with the ideals of the other the warmest sympathy.

The aim they have set themselves is the friendly and pacific office of helping those only who desire such suggestions as they offer here, and to help them in such a way that they may help themselves the better to the bounty the poet supplies.

This book is based, therefore, as to its general design, in its classifications, its "Topics," "Hints," and "Queries for Discussion," on the gradual unfolding of the matter the poems contain, all or very nearly all of Browning's poems being woven into its plan.

Beginning with the slighter and more obvious poems, and with suggestions upon them, accordingly, which are often, perhaps, more obvious than some readers will need, but which others, especially young readers or those new to



Browning, may possibly require,—the programmes proceed thence to the less simple poems, and follow them on with suggestions also growing less simple, partly by reason of the complex subjects, and partly because it is intended to help the reader less and less. Having learned how to go on freely in the path opened out to him, it is supposed that he will not require so many hints, but be able to pass on without continuous guidance, yet without neglecting to notice all the steps in the processes of poetic construction, which are pointed out with less detail or overleaped altogether in the Second Series of Programmes.

The general order throughout is chronological, so far as this is consistent with the consideration, for the most part, of the easier and less involved poems to begin with, and concluding with poems more complicated or admitting of wider classifications or more abstract generalizations.

Discussions of moot-questions indirectly growing out of the subject-matter are intended to follow study of the work itself, as this is the nucleus whence they are derived and should receive first attention.

The cardinal principle of the whole plan is that all deductions, æsthetic, critical, ethical, however personal impression and point of view may color them, should be based on thorough acquaintance with what actually is in the poems,

instead of on what is off-hand assumed to be in them. Most poets have suffered from such assumptions, repeated till they were taken for granted, and have thence been compelled to bear fault-finding and misunderstanding or praise and glozing, as the case might be, all equally built on breath. Browning has suffered peculiarly, and especially as an artist, from this sort of inaccurate observation or inattention to just what is in his work and just how and in what relation it is expressed.

Mere analysis, it is held, is not exact observation. Synthetic relation of all the parts of any work of art are necessary merely to its perception. Neither will one or two such perceptions tell a straight story. Correlation of the characteristics of a poet's work and method is the only fit foundation for genuine appreciation or criticism.

Those happily constituted persons who at a glance are really able to set themselves in sufficiently close accord with poets of various genius to get out of their work all there is in it of beauty and significance, are clearly best off alone. Who can be justified in quarrelling with their light-winged happiness?

Others, better off with helpful fellowship, are as clearly justified in less lonely appreciation of the ways of genius with mankind. And these may find clew, or stimulation, or merely the trusty staff of orderly arrangement supplied

them in this attempt to direct, by suggestive outlines, their steadfast scrutiny upon the whole body of Browning's work. To them the patient brooding of the alert and inquiring yet docile intelligence may be the means of opening out half-unsuspected traits of beauty and significance, — a work of art rewarding intimate attention as a work of nature does when it yields up its lurking loveliness to the steady eye of the painter bent on discerning it in its integrity and symmetry.

BOSTON, *November 3, 1899.*





## General Introduction

What were life  
Did soul stand still therein, forego her strife  
Through the ambiguous Present to the goal  
Of some all-reconciling Future ?

PARLEYINGS : WITH GERARD DE LAIRESSE.

THE poetic motive informing Browning's work is, in one word, aspiration, which moulds and develops the varied and complex personalities of the humanity he depicts, as the persistent energy of the scientist, holding its never-wearying way, gives to the world of phenomena its infinite array of shows and shapes. Aspiration — a reaching on and upwards — is the primal energy underneath that law which we call progress. Through aspiration, ideals — social, religious, artistic — are formed; and through it ideals perish, as it breaks away from them to seek more complete realizations of truth. Aspiration, therefore, has its negative as well as its positive side. While it ever urges the human soul to love and achievement, through its very persistence the soul learns that the perfect flowering of its rare imaginings is not possible of attainment in this life.

Assurance of the ultimate fulfilment of the ideal is one of the forms in which Browning unfolds the workings of this life principle, well illustrated in "Abt Vogler," who has implicit faith in his own intuitions of a final harmony; or in those poems where the crowning of aspiration in a supreme earthly love flashes upon the understanding a clear vision of infinite love. But by far

the larger number of poems discloses the underlying force at work in ways more subtle and obscure, through the conflict of good and evil, of lower with higher ideals, either as emphasized in great social movements, in the struggle between individuals, or in struggles fought out on the battle-ground within every human soul.

With a motive so all-inclusive, the whole panorama of human life, with its loves and hates, its strivings and failures, its half-reasonings and beguiling sophistries, is material ready at hand for illustration. Browning, inspired with a democratic inclusiveness, allowed his choice in subject-matter to range through fields both new and old, unploughed by any poet before him. Progress, to be imaged forth in its entirety, must be interpreted, not only through the individual soul, but through the collective soul of the human race; wherefore many phases of civilization and many attitudes of mind must be detailed for service. There is no choosing a subject, as a Tennyson might, on the ground that it will best point the moral of a preconceived theory of life; on the contrary, every such theory is bound to be of interest as one of the phenomena exhibited by the transcending principle.

From first to last Browning portrayed life either developing or at some crucial moment, the outcome of past development, or the determinative influence for future growth or decay.

His interest in the phenomena of life as a whole, freed him from the trammels of any literary cult. He steps out from under the yoke of the classicist, where only gods and heroes have leave to breathe; and, equally, from that of the romanticist, where kings and persons of quality alone flourish. Wherever he found latent possibilities of character, which might be made to expand under the glare of his brilliant imagination, whether in hero, king, or knave, that being he chose to set before his readers as a living individuality to show whereof he was made, either through his own ruminations or through the force of circumstances.

Upon examination it will be found that the sources, many and various, of Browning's subject-matter are broadly divisible into subjects derived from history, from personal experience or biography, from true incidents, popular legend, the classics, and from his own fertile imagination. Of these, history proper furnishes the smallest proportion. "Strafford" and "King Victor and King Charles" are his only historical dramas, and with "Sordello," and a few stray short poems, based on historical incidents and persons, exhaust his drafts upon history. Several more have a historical setting with fictitious plot and typically historic characters, such as the "Return of the Druses" and "Luria;" and still more have a historical atmosphere in which think and move creatures of his own fancy, such as "My Last Duchess," "Count Gismond," "In a Gondola." His most important work, "The Ring and the Book," is founded on the true story of a Roman murder case. Others of his longer poems, developed from real occurrences, are "The Inn Album," "Red Cotton Night-Cap Country," "Ivàn Ivànovitch," and some shorter poems. The individual living to develop the mind stuff of the world rather than the individual playing a part in action, attracted Browning, and we find a large percentage of his subjects — between twenty and thirty poems — to be dramatic presentations of characters not distinguished for their part in the history of action, but who have played a part more or less prominent in the history of thought or art. Such are "Paracelsus," "Saul," "Abt Vogler," "Fra Lippo Lippi." Sometimes they appear in the disguise of a name not their own, as in "Bishop Blougram," for whom Cardinal Wiseman sat, "Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau" — Napoleon, Mr. Sludge — Home, the Spiritualist. "The Pied Piper" and "Gold Hair" are familiar examples of legendary subjects. Greece is drawn upon in the translation from the Greek of "Agamemnon," to which must be added "Balaustion's Adventure" and "Aristophanes' Apology," both of

which contain transcripts from Euripides ; also "Echelos," "Pheidippides," "Artemis Prologizes," and "Ixion." There should furthermore be mentioned a few poems which grew out of suggestions furnished by poetry, music, and art, as "Cenciaja," "A Toccata of Galuppi's," "The Guardian Angel." And last, out of the pure stuff of imagination, have been fashioned some of his most lifelike characters. Sometimes, as already stated, they move in an actual historical environment, sometimes merely in an atmosphere of history, and sometimes, detached from time and place, is pictured a human soul struggling with a passion universal to mankind.

This vast range of material is not by any means chosen by the poet at random. There are several centres of human thought, around which the genius of Browning plays with exceptional power. Such, for example, are the ideas symbolized in human love and service, in art, and in the Incarnation.

Clustering about the instinct of human love, gathers thickest a maze of poems bearing witness to the force, sweetness, and versatility of Browning's treatment of the purely personal emotions. The scope sweeps from primitive to consummate types, as if none conceivable were to be tabooed, or as if Aprile's desire, the poet in "Paracelsus," had been Browning's own.

"Every passion sprung from man, conceived by man,  
Would I express and clothe in its right form,  
. . . No thought which ever stirred  
A human breast should be untold ; all passions,  
All soft emotions, from the turbulent stir  
Within a heart fed with desires like mine,  
To the last comfort shutting the tired lids  
Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away  
Beneath the tent-tree by the wayside well."

Yet the unifying current is clear through all differentiations, because it is based on the vital fact of the psychical

origin of the emotion of love as desire, and capable, therefore, of a never-ending tendency to impel and reveal the highest potency of each individual soul. The conditions under which it acts may be favorable or not, the outgoing love may be satisfied or not, by eliciting and enjoying love in return; in any case, the test is equally good to make a soul declare itself — “to wit, by its fruit, the thing it does,” and thus, through living out its own life, to recruit both the general plan of the race and its own individual possibilities.

The psychical value, of which the commonest instinct towards love, in any and every human creature, is capable, relates all men to each other, and, pointing out the implicit use of each to each, permits none to be scorned as having no part in the scheme, nor any to be denied the vision of some dim desecrated glory “ever on before.” It constitutes a revelation to every man of the Infinite, incarnate within his own grasp and proof, — a miracle only to be felt, differing in this from any attempt to achieve the Absolute through act or deed or any product of effort outside oneself, one instant of human consciousness enabling the laying hold on eternity.

Some of these poems represent the instinct of love astir in modes that foster the transmutation of desire into force, no matter what obstacles beset it; in others egotism and conventionality chill and obstruct its saving rule, although its way be smooth. The merely selfish expression of the common instinct is depicted in “The Laboratory” and “My Last Duchess;” the unselfish, in “One Way of Love.” Its seeing faculty appears in “Cristina” and “The Last Ride Together;” but its eyes are sealed until too late in “The Confessional,” and in Constance in “In a Balcony.” It finds itself expressed in a conventionalized way in “Numpholeptos;” in a realistic way in “Poetics.” It is revealed in “Count Gismond” as a rudimentary relation between husband and wife; as ripe in “By the Fireside.” It is stifled in “Bifurcation,” “The Statue and the Bust,”



"Youth and Art," "Dis Aliter Visum;" it is self-baffled in "A Forgiveness" and "In a Balcony;" but has sway despite Death in "Prospice" and "Never the Time and the Place." All these separate ways of love are glimpses at parts of human experience, which, since they can be correlated, illumine the course of growth latent for any soul in a crisis of emotion. Other poems still exemplify this by correlating various stages of development occurring in the experience of one person, the original manifestation of love adding to itself a new psychical value, as in "James Lee's Wife."

Taken as a whole, Browning's broad and vital representations of love reveal the related values of different phases of personal experience and of each personal experience to every other; and, also, the bearing of each and all such experiences on human progress and on an ecstatic consciousness of the Infinite.

In the manifestations of human energy commonly called social, corresponding orbits of relative values are brought to light by Browning through his reconstruction from life itself of numerous varying types of work and consequent service to humanity at large. The range exemplified includes the exercise of his art by a Fra Lippo Lippi, an Abt Vogler, or a Cleon, the devotion to his study of a Grammarian or the public achievement of a Pheidippides, a Hervé Riel, a Pym, a Strafford, or a Luria. Browning shows a consciousness of the special influence of certain historic periods of civic enthusiasm on the development of social ideals. The grim righteousness of Pym's London, the glories of Athens and of Florence, are fitly celebrated. And in the whole pioneer period which sowed the seed and set the shape of much that is not yet ripe for fulfilment in modern civilization—in the period of the Italian Renaissance, Browning's imaginative conception found frame and flesh. In "Sordello" he described the incipient democratic tendencies of that period, anticipating the conclusions of its special historians: of Burckhardt, who characterized it as "the

"Pauline," was succeeded in "Paracelsus" by an imaginary representation of a poet, Aprile, who, like Shelley, was the impersonation of spiritual love and human ardor. In "Sordello" this fervent poetic type, which yearns to bury itself in what it worships, again appears. It is now contrasted and merged with a new self-centred type of poet which holds its own consciousness aloof from its dreams, yet finds no dream or function of life without as good a counterpart within itself. The distinction here made between what is called the subjective poet, such a one as Shelley, and the objective or dramatic poet, such a one as Shakespeare, recurs in the prose essay on Shelley, and some variety of one or the other or hoped-for blending of both types animates all his impersonations of poets. Eglamor in "Sordello" is a bardling of limited possibilities who is ennobled by his devotion to his art. In "The Glove" Ronsard and Marot are incidentally characterized and contrasted to the advantage of the poet more deeply versed both in lore and life. Keats appears in "Popularity" as a poet dowering the world and many imitators with a beauty never seen before. Shelley again has a tribute of personal love in "Memorabilia." Euripides and Aristophanes owe to Browning, in "Balaustion's Adventure" and "Aristophanes' Apology," the deepest appreciation and soundest criticism they have ever received at any one man's hands.

Shakespeare is directly defended, in "At the 'Mermaid,'" from charges of pessimism, derision of women, and uneasy ambition to figure in court life, — charges more or less involved in some modern conceptions of him based on an autobiographical reading of the Sonnets and Plays. The sonnet theory is again directly combated in "House;" and "Shop" may perhaps be taken as falling in with these two. Both "At the 'Mermaid'" and "House" rest on a conception of Shakespeare as belonging altogether to the objective type of poet. And the Shakespeare Sonnet, "The Names," is in accord with

a view which accepts him as the supreme dramatic creator.

In the verses beginning "Touch him ne'er so lightly," Browning sings the way of pain and obstacle through which pass the master poets who sum up great epochs of national life — such a poet as Dante — and who transmute the bitterness of sorrow into the splendor of song.

Expressions concerning the philosophy of the poet's art and self-development are to be found in "Sordello," "The Ring and the Book," and the "Parleying with Christopher Smart." In "Transcendentalism" and "How it Strikes a Contemporary" are celebrated the vitality of the poet's gift, the keenness of the poet's sight, the warmth and humanity of his heart and office. The whole range of his work on poetic art is in accord in placing the poet somewhat less within the influence of the historic times to which he is related, than the artist or even the musician. The poet's fortune is read aright for more than one age, if not for all time, in his intimate and loving kinships with humanity, his clear oversight and deep insight upon the springs of life and progress, in the dependency of his artistic power on his truth to his own highest energies and aspiration.

The most exalted ideal towards which the human soul aspires is that of divine love, and this, as symbolized in the idea of the Incarnation, Browning has presented from every side. Even in so humble a thinker as Caliban, the germ of religious aspiration is discernible in his conception of a God above Setebos who, if not very positive in his possession of good qualities, is at least negative so far as bad ones are concerned.

Browning's work is rich in poems which revolve about this central idea. In David, the intensity of his human love exalts his conception of God from that of power into that of love, and with prophetic vision he sees the future attainment of a religious ideal in which love like unto human love shall have a place. What a powerful force this longing is in the human mind is again illustrated in

Cleon, the cultured Greek who, despite his broad sympathies and deep appreciation of all forms of beauty, feels that life is not capable of affording a realization of joy such as the soul sees. Like Saul, an immortality of deed has no attractions for him; it is the assurance of a continuing personality that he wants. Karshish, the Arab, too, is haunted by the idea of a God who is love; but neither in him nor in Cleon has the aspiration reached such a point that they are enabled to conceive of the ideal as actual, though living at the time of Christ. In "A Death in the Desert" is presented the portrait of one who has seen the ideal incarnate.

Other phases of doubt and faith are pictured as affected by more sophisticated stages of culture. While Cleon and Karshish belong to a phase of development wherein the mind has not fully grasped the possibilities of such a conception, a Bishop Blougram's doubts grow out of the uncertainties of the nature of proof. Far from being sure, like David, that the incarnation will become a veritable truth, he can only hope that it may have been true, and resolve to act as if he believed it were. Still another phase of doubt is shown in "Ferishtah's Fancies," where the belief in an actual incarnation is scouted by an Oriental as preposterous.

The assurance of divine love does not come to all of Browning's characters through a belief in external revelation. For instance, in the Epilogue to "Dramatis Personæ," and in "Fears and Scruples," it is through the experiencing of human love alone, reaching out toward God, which carries the conviction that there must be a God of love to receive it, though he may never have manifested himself in the flesh. In "Ferishtah's Fancies," again, Ferishtah, who sternly reprimands the unbeliever already mentioned, seems to regard the ideal of an actual incarnation as a human conception, but, nevertheless, doing duty as a symbol of the Divine, and thus helping men to approach the Infinite.

In giving a sketch of the general motive and content

of Browning's work, we have treated it as essentially dramatic. It is to be noted, however, that he has carried his observations of the realities of life into regions never approached by any other poet, — that is, into the thoughts and motives of humanity, the very sources of world movements, — with the result that we do not see his characters in action so much as in the intellectual fermentation, which is not merely the concomitant but the initiation of action. This fact, namely, that his imagination invests the subjective side of man's life with vitality, sets up a certain spiritual kinship between the poet and his characters, and justifies the search for a philosophy which may be styled Browning's own; yet, that any such search must be conducted with the utmost discretion is evidenced by the existence of many diversities in opinion upon this subject. It is dangerous to regard each poem as a mask from behind which Browning in his own person peeps forth; for the more one studies his creations, the more the peculiar individualisms of their natures assert themselves, and the more the poet retires into the background. Even admitting that there are certain religious and philosophical ideas upon which many of his *dramatis personæ* dwell, each one presents them from his own point of view, and in a form of expression suited to the particular character and circumstance. Moreover, the ever-recurring idea in new modes of expression is absolutely true to the life of thought in the world. It is no more surprising that David, Rabbi Ben Ezra, the husband in "Fifine at the Fair," and Paracelsus should have some points of philosophy in common, than that the wits of Plato, Buddha, Herbert Spencer, and the North American Indians should occasionally jump together. We have seen how he discriminates against no form of doubt or faith by allowing every shade of opinion to be presented from the standpoint of one who holds it. This is external evidence of his friendliness toward all forms of effort that indicate a search for the truth. With which particular phase of truth the

poet himself is to be identified, it would be difficult to discover, but it is not so impossible to deduce general principles; not only from the fact that aspiration is plainly the informing spirit of his work, but because from time to time this informing spirit forces itself to the surface in an expression avowedly the poet's own. From such expressions, of which the third division of the "Epilogue" to "Dramatis Personæ," "Reverie" in "Asolando," passages in "Paracelsus," "Sordello," and "Fërishtah's Fancies" are examples, together with the whole trend of his work, his philosophy, broadly speaking, may be described as based upon the revelation of divine love in every human being, through experience of love reaching out toward an object which shall completely satisfy aspiration. The partial manifestations of love include the feeling of gratitude awakened through the enjoyment of benefits received, like that felt by Fërishtah when he eats a cherry for breakfast; the creative impulse, yearning to all-express itself in art; love seeking its human complement; and love seeking expression in service to humanity. Moral failure, resulting in evil; intellectual failure, resulting in ignorance, are simply the necessary means for the further development of the soul, and the continuance of the law of progress. While the revelation of God is thus entirely subjective, his conception of God is both subjective and objective. Looking forth upon the world, he sees Power and Law exemplified; looking within himself, he sees Power and Law manifested as Love. God, then, must be both Power and Love, as Rabbi Ben Ezra discovered, and with this dramatic expression may be paralleled the subjective expression of the same conclusion in "Reverie," — the poet's last piece of profound philosophizing.

The faculty for twofold gaze within and without, on which Browning's reconciliation of Power and Love is built, has enabled him to effect a like reconciliation between Power in Art — the ability to appropriate and project



into form large swaths of fresh and living material — and Love in Art — the ardor to charge and energize the whole with spiritual attractiveness and meaning.

The analytic tendency, for which he is often censured, does not control, it subserves a much more noticeable faculty for synthesis — for seeing and reproducing wholes.

Another unusually happy balance of capabilities distinguishes Browning. The moral interests which weight his work with significance are lightened with an over-play of humor — a product of his double vision. With what genial facility he enters, for example, into Baldinucci's simple old man's nature, and lends the poet-wit to the exquisite clumsiness of his joke against the Jews; and then again, with what easy-going, wide-sweeping sympathy he enters into the complex course of law and custom which turns the laugh on Baldinucci, after all. So, in this, as in many another such dramatic picture of poor old human nature, the moral lesson is itself made dramatic.

Lend Browning but a little consideration, and the opulence of his effects will convince you that these two-fold counterpoised faculties have found way in the sort of art which embodies them, because that alone was large enough to befit them. Lyric, idyl, tale, fantasy, and philosophic imagining are enclosed in the all-embracing dramatic frame.

His artistic invention, moreover, working within the dramatic sphere, expended itself in perfecting a poetical form peculiarly his own, — the monologue.

His monologues range from expressions of mood as simple as in the song, "Nay, but you, who do not love her," to those in which not only the complex feelings of the speaker are expressed, but complete pictures of a second and sometimes a third character are given; or even groups of characters as in "Fra Lippo Lippi," where the curious, alert Florentine guards are not all portrayed with equal clearness, but are all made to emerge

effectively in a picturesque knot, showing here a hang-dog face, and there a twinkling eye, or a brawny arm elbowing a neighbor. By dexterous weaving in of allusions, flashes of light are turned upon events and feelings of the past, so adding harmonious depths to the general effect.

His diction is noticeable in that he uses a large proportion of Saxon words, and, by so doing, gives a lifelike naturalness to his speech, especially in his shorter poems, in which his characters do not talk as if they were confined within metrical limits, but seemingly as if the unstilted ways of daily life were open to them. Yet in all this apparently natural flow of words, there is a harmony of rhythm, a recurring stress of rhyme, and a condensation of thought that produce an effect of consummate art, frequently enhanced by a subtle symbolism underlying the words. How simple in its mere external form is the little poem "Appearances"! Two momentary scenes, a few words to each, yet there have been laid bare the worldly, ambitious heart of one person and the true heart of another, disappointed by the shattering of his idol; and under all, symbolically, a universal truth.

The obscurity with which Browning has been taxed so often is largely due to his monologue form. It is apt to be confusing at first, mainly because nothing like it has been met with before. The mind must be on the alert to catch the power of every word, to see its individual force and its relational force. Nothing, neither a scene nor an event, is described outright. Only in the course of the talk, references to events and scenes are made a part of the very warp and woof of the poem, and woven in with such skilfulness by the poet that the entire scene or event may be reconstructed by those who have eyes to see.

A harmonizing of imagery and of rhythm and even rhyme with the subject in hand is a marked characteristic of Browning's verse.

In the poems "Meeting at Night" and "Parting at Morning," the wave motion of the sea is indicated in

the form, not only by the arrangement of the rhymes to form a climax by bringing a couplet in the middle of the stanza like the crest of the wave, but the thought, also, gathers to a climax midway in the stanzas, and subsides toward their close.

The measure of "Pheidippides" is a mixture of dactyls and spondees, original with the poet, with a pause at the end of each line, which reflects the firm-set eager purpose of the patriotic Greek runner and the breath-obstructed rhythm of his bounding flight.

In "James Lee's Wife," the metre is changed in each lyric to chime in with the changing mood dictating each one; and the imagery is in general chosen to mate every aspect of the thought dominating each mood. For example, in the second section, called "By the Fireside," the fire of shipwreck wood is the metaphor made to yield the mood of the brooding wife a mould which takes the cast of every sudden turn and cranny of her ill-foreboding reverie.

In the grotesque, frequently double rhymes, and the rough rhythm of "The Flight of the Duchess," the bluff, blunt manner of the huntsman who tells the story is conveyed. The subtle change that passes over the spirit of the tale as the rhythm falls tranquilly, with pure rhymes, now, into the dreamy chant of the gypsy, is the more effective for the colloquial swing, stop, and start of the forester's gruff-voiced diction.

It may be said that Browning has had always in mind imaginary personalities, appearing in various guises and living under manifold circumstances, to guide him in fashioning his style; and seldom is his art not keyed to attune with the theme and motive it interprets. As an artist he disclaimed the nice selection and employment of a style in itself beautiful. As an artist, none the less, he chose to create in every given case a style fitly proportioned to the design, finding in that dramatic relating of the style to the design a more vital beauty.

# Browning Study Programmes



## POEMS OF ADVENTURE AND HEROISM

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[References are to the *Camberwell Browning*. T. Y. Crowell  
& Co., New York and Boston.]

1. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Stories of the Poems and how they are Told.

*Hints:* — 1. "How They Brought the Good News." Tell in a few words the gist of the story. For help in this see *Camberwell Browning*, volume and page cited above.

Note that the story is told by one of the men who took part in the ride. How much do we learn in the first stanza? Simply that the three men galloped out into the midnight with a "good-speed" from the

watchman who opened the gate, and that the walls echoed his salute. In the second stanza we learn how the three men all kept abreast of each other in the ride ; and, more particularly, what the teller of the story did to make the riding easier for his horse, Roland ; and there is a hint of Roland's superiority indicated when he says that Roland galloped none the less steadily. What additions are made to the picture in the third stanza ? Not only that it had been a dark night, for the moon was setting when they started, but that the men had been galloping all night and that morning is now breaking ; and in the remark with which Joris broke their continued silence, " Yet there is time," we learn that they must reach their journey's end before a certain hour or it will be too late. The fourth and fifth stanzas are devoted to a description of Roland as his master sees him, now the sun is up, through the early morning mist. In the sixth stanza, Dirck's horse gives out ; and in the seventh, we have the picture of Joris and the speaker galloping along in the bright sunlight, and, through Joris again, we learn that their destination is Aix. In the eighth, Joris's roan gives out and Roland alone is left, and for the first time we really know that they have been galloping to Aix to save the city from its fate. In the ninth stanza, we have the last stretch of the gallop, when the rider does everything he can to lighten the weight for Roland and to encourage him, with the result that he reaches Aix before it is too late. In the tenth, the good horse Roland is rewarded by the last measure of wine the burgesses of Aix had, from which we may gather that the town was in a pretty bad way. If it were not for the title of this poem we should be completely in the dark as to the purpose of the three horse-

men until we reach which stanza? And how much does that tell us?

In telling the story does the poet use many words that are hard to understand? What are they, and where do they occur?

Where are the towns which are mentioned in the ride?

(For answers to these questions see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IV., p. 362.)

*Queries for Discussion.* — Would the poem be any more interesting if we knew exactly what the news was and what fate it saved Aix from? What do you think makes it so interesting?

Would it have been possible for a horse to gallop as many miles as Browning represents Roland as doing?

Do the little inaccuracies of the poet spoil the effect of the poem?

*Hints:* — 2. "Through the Metidja." What does this poem describe? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IV., p. 363.)

Is this ride shared by as many riders as that of the preceding poem? How is its story told? Notice that a series of events do not happen as in the first poem. The story this lonely rider has to make known to us is largely that of the emotions arising within him; but is it only that? From the first stanza we learn that he is trusting to his own heart to guide him somewhere. Swayed by his excited feelings, his scrutiny of some one in whom the tribe he belongs to are confiding is doubly keen, that is, he looks both with the eyes of sense and of insight, "as I were double-eyed." From what is said in the second stanza it comes out that this some one is their chief, who has allied forces under him, and that it is to him

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the rider is speeding. We thus learn sympathetically from the Arab rider himself the information given in the title. His fierce loyalty to his chief appears, also, in this stanza through the defiant pride which makes him ask if witnesses are denied him in the empty desert. This strange question excites not only our curiosity, but our sense of something uncanny. In the third stanza we gather from his mention of an "inner voice," that these witnesses are creatures of his fancy, whom the sliding sands seem to disclose, and then, also, that they are dead men, "homicides," who come boasting to the desert, only to perish there. What do you think is meant by "homicides"? You guess that these are soldiers who come expecting to kill the Arabs, and who are themselves killed. What do you think of the rider's scornful question, "Has he lied?" Does this seem to imply that the chief to whom the rider is so loyal rests under some suspicion with the other Arabs, and that these "homicides" themselves had underestimated his strength and craft as a leader of these desert tribes? Do you think this broken and mysterious way of expressing himself natural and life-like, but a mistake because it leaves the story obscure? Or does it lead us to get at this story better because we have to enter into the feeling of this desperate man to understand it? In the fourth stanza he turns away from his own sensations to describe his horse. What does he say of him? What kind of a foot has a zebra? Is the thigh of an ostrich strong? How does this stanza increase the impression of hot haste and excitement? In the last stanza the sense of adventure and risk, and of the intense tribal feeling of the rider is brought to a climax. How is this done? By his mention of fate, and his



religion, and the blind faith that urges him to this ride, even if it be to death. We seem to learn the story of this ride the best through learning the most of the rider. Since he declares himself ready to die when the Prophet and the Bride stop the blood swelling his veins so fiercely, we learn that his ride is taken in the face of great risks, with almost certain death in the end. Who are the Prophet and the Bride? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IV., p. 364.)

*Queries for Discussion.* — Is the ride described in this poem less thrilling than that of the first? Or more so, because you learn from it more of the rider and less of the horse? Is it necessarily true that a more psychological view of an adventure is less interesting than an external view?

*Hints:* — 3. “Muléykeh.” What in a few words is the story of this poem? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. XI., p. 315.) In the first four stanzas we are introduced to the wonderful mare Muléykeh and her master through the conversation of a stranger to Hóseyn and a friend. Notice the impression a stranger would get of Hóseyn from the poor look of his tent and what the friend would reply to show that he needed neither pity nor scorn. What does he represent Hóseyn as “laughing in his soul,” — that is, as thinking in a laughing mood? What is his friend’s opinion of his attitude? Who does the stranger decide to lavish his pity upon in the fourth stanza, and why? In the fifth stanza the poet takes up the story of Duhl’s attempts to get the coveted prize, Muléykeh. How does Hóseyn treat Duhl’s offer to buy her in the sixth stanza? To Duhl’s second attempt a year later to get Muléykeh by begging her for his son, what is Hóseyn’s answer? When

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after another year Duhl attempts to steal the Pearl, what excuses does he make for his action? To what does Duhl refer in lines 58 and 59? He means to point out that Hóseyn was so generous that he had killed one of his horses to feast a chance-comer and had given his robe to two poor singing girls, and knowing this he had ventured to play upon his generosity when he begged the Pearl from him. In line 65 it appears that he had sent a spy beforehand to find out where the Pearl was kept. What picture does he give us of Hóseyn and his mare as he found them? And of Buhéyseh her sister? Describe the incidents of the theft and the pursuit which followed. Describe the last view we get of Hóseyn.

*Queries for Discussion.* — If Hóseyn had been represented as resisting the temptation to prove Muléykeh's unrivalled swiftness it would have made the mare the centre of the poem, would it not, instead of her master? Is the poem made the more interesting through Hóseyn's inner struggle being brought out, or less so?

*Hints:* — 4. "Donald." Give a summary, briefly, of the story. (See *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, Vol. XI., p. 324.) Who is the speaker of the first two lines of the poem, and to whom are they addressed, the reader, or "the boys from Oxford"? To whom is this explanation addressed, about the boys, where they were from, and how young they were? The scene of the poem and an account of what "the boys" were talking about is the theme of the following stanzas leading up to the story of Donald. How many of the stanzas are taken up with this preparatory framework for the story, and where does the actual story itself begin? Notice that this preparatory setting of

the story is not merely descriptive, but descriptive in a dramatic way of the scene and the mood and talk both of the boys and the story-teller. How much is made known in this way of the scene inside the bothie? What are the boys doing, and how does their opinion of the value of "Sport" to a man differ from the story-teller's? But does the teller of the story say what he thinks about "Sport"? What is his opinion, do you think, and how do you know? Is Donald's story (lines 61-224) really "just what he told us himself" or the story-teller's version of it? Notice how many stanzas are devoted to putting before the eye the precise scene where Donald's adventure was to take place, before Donald himself is mentioned. This picturesque manner of description belongs to the story throughout; but observe that the interest intensifies at the climax of the meeting with the stag (lines 144-168). Is this due merely to the excitement and suspense at this point, or, also, to the poet's way of telling about it? Notice that the descriptive style changes to direct presentation, first, of Donald's idea of the way out of the situation (lines 144 and 152), expressed dramatically, just as Donald himself thinks it and says it; and second, by the stag's expression, not, of course, in words, but by action, of his understanding of what to do. The story-teller drops the past tense here, and speaks in the present tense, as if the events described were at that moment taking place, reverting to the past tense again with the return to his own feelings about Donald's act (lines 185-189). Show how the description he gives of Donald's crippled state, and how the fellow made his living afterwards is again enlivened by the dramatic style, in giving the comment of different people on

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Donald's adventure, including his own. Why does he himself hope he gave twice as much as the rest?

Is the quotation from Homer appropriately put in the mouth of the story-teller? Why? Notice what one of "the boys" says (line 43). What does the story-teller mean, in lines 185-189, by saying he will dare to place himself by God? — that he will venture to judge as God? To whom does he apply the "plain words" he hears? What allusions in the poem reveal the place in Great Britain where the story takes place? What is a "bothie?" Was their fire made of coal or wood? (See line 9.) "The trivet," "Glenlivet." (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. XI., p. 324.) The speaker seems to be satirical about there not having been any boasting; or are five score brace of grouse just enough to fill a game bag? "Ten hours' stalk of the Royal" (line 16). Why would this be an unheard-of feat? What different class of feats has the speaker succeeded in? Explain a "Double-First," line 42. Where is Ross-shire? Some of the characteristics of the country are mentioned in a single line (76). What are these? What other words indicating the country are there in this poem? (See lines 79, 103, 107.) What is the difference between a "red deer" and a "fallow deer?" What is the "pastern" (line 182)? There are two references to books in this poem. Which are they?

*Queries for Discussion.* — Is this poem a good argument against Sport? Is Donald's act only that of an exceptionally unfeeling and ungenerous sportsman, do you think, or is Walter Scott right in saying what he does about it? (Scott's opinion is given in notes to the poem already cited.)

*Hints:* — 5. “Tray.” Give a summed-up account. (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. XI., p. 306.) As a little introduction to the story of this poem, notice that some one is represented as asking three bards for a tale which will satisfy his thirst of soul. He interrupts the first and the second bard, but decides to hear the third bard’s tale of a beggar child. Notice how this third bard tells the story partly in narrative form and partly in dramatic form. Point out where these changes in the manner of telling occur and notice that the transition from one to the other is made directly without any intermediate “they said” or “he says.” Is there any exception to this? What are the only aspects of the situation that appeal to the bystanders? Do you get the impression that the poet who tells the story is in sympathy with the dog rather than with the bystanders? What is there in the manner of telling the story that gives you this impression?

What unusual words are there in the poem? For “eke” and “habergeon” see Notes, *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. XI., p. 306. Is “helm” an unusual word for helmer? By vivisection is meant the experimenting upon animals while still alive, so that their physical conditions and nervous action may be observed and knowledge gained thereby to be used in the surgical and medical treatment of human beings. This results, of course, in torture to the animal; and Browning was one of those who thought that any gains won by such means cost too much pain to the animal, resulted in a dulling of human kindliness, and, in this case, was grossly stupid because useless. Is any especial hero referred to in *Sir Olaf*? Browning may have had in mind King Olaf II. of Norway, called St. Olaf, who was very energetic in spreading Christianity throughout

his kingdom, and was driven from his throne by Canute in 1030. Or he may simply have used the name to stand as a type of the mediæval Christian Knight of Chivalry.

Is there anything in the poem to indicate where the incident occurred? The only indication is in the word "quay," which points to Paris because there are quays (or *quais*) along the banks of the Seine where little beggar girls might sit. On the other hand, Tray is a good old English name for a dog, used by Shakespeare in "Lear," iii. 6, 65. As the incident really occurred in Paris (see notes before cited) Browning probably thought of the setting as there, while in every other particular he made the poem English.

*Query for Discussion.* — Is this poem chiefly interesting because of its graphic description of a picturesque event, or because of its pointing a moral against vivisection and against that type of scientist which thinks by external experiment to find out all the secrets of the inner nature?

*Hints:* — 6. "Hervé Riel." The gist of this story may be given in a few words (see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IX., p. 302), but it is to be noticed that only by giving some idea of how this story is told, can any notion be gained of the risk and excitement attending this adventure of piloting the French ships into the harbor and saving them from the pursuing English fleet. Show how this patriotic adventure is told. In the first stanza, what image gives you a picture of the whole situation? What further knowledge of it do you gain from the second stanza? The desperateness of the situation is shown how, in the third stanza? By direct description? How,



then? How are the council and its decision described in stanza iv., dramatically or narratively? The next stanza introduces the deliverer from a peril not only made known but accepted as hopeless. A gleam of escape dawns with his appearance. How do you get this impression? Nothing definite comes out as to the way of escape, but only that there is one, according to this "simple Breton sailor," until line 60 of stanza vi. Up to that point, however, how does the story get on? The way of escape is only hinted at, but the patriotism and ability and character of the deliverer are made clear, and with the close of the stanza you not only know what the way out is going to be, but you have a glowing sense of the capacity of Hervé to accomplish it. What makes you draw these conclusions as to, first, his character, second, his patriotism, third, his ability? Notice that in stanza vi. Hervé is made to speak for himself directly. Does he boast? Is he right, then, in speaking so confidently of himself and so bitterly of the other pilots? What do you think?

Look up on the map the geographical and local allusions in this poem, and explain their use here. (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. XI., Notes, p. 303.) Which is the biggest ship? Notice that this is the flagship of Admiral Damfreville, and is spoken of as having "twelve and eighty guns." Is this an English or a French way of counting? (*Quatre-vingt-douze*.) What does Browning mean by the "rank-on-rank" of "heroes flung pell-mell on the Louvre, face and flank"?

*Queries for Discussion.* — Does the interest of the poem end with the end of the adventure? Notice that if it did, stanza vii., which describes how the ships



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entered the harbor safely and how Hervé proved his word, would properly end the poem, and all that comes after it would be superfluous. Is it? If you think it is not, say why, and show what interests you in the following stanzas, and how it is all made known. Notice, as a sign that the hero of this adventure is more important than the adventure itself, graphic and exciting as that is, that the title of the poem is "Hervé Riel," and not "How Hervé Riel Steered the Ships into Harbor." Why is that sort of a title the right one for "How they Brought the Good News," while the other suits this?

*Hints* : — 7. "Echetlos?" (For account of the poem see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. XI., Notes, p. 311.)

This is a very simple and direct narrative. Two stanzas are occupied with a general description of the battle of Marathon. In the third stanza one man is singled out for special description. What point about him is noted first? In the fourth stanza a description of this man's appearance is given. How is he then described as helping the Greeks. What became of him when the battle was over and what did the Oracle say about it? The final stanza gives a reflection made by the poet, himself, upon the last words of the Oracle, l. 27, — "The great deed ne'er grows small," namely, that the great name too often does, as illustrated in the case of what distinguished Athenians?

Are any unusual words used in this poem? A "share," l. 12, is the broad blade of the plough that cuts the ground. "Tunnies," l. 13, are fish belonging to the mackerel family, but somewhat different in form and much larger than the ordinary mackerel.

Those found in the Mediterranean sometimes weigh 1,000 pounds. "Phalanx," l. 16: In early Greek times a body of soldiers formed in a square, in close rank and file with their shields joined and their pikes crossing each other. (For an account of Greek Oracles, line 25, see Smith's "History of Greece.")

*Queries for Discussion.* — Is the attitude of a genuine hero rightly to make light of honor due him as the doer of a great deed? And is it necessarily a mistake, as this poem suggests, for the public to honor the doer of a deed, instead of the deed itself? Why? Is it right for a country to show its gratitude substantially to its heroes; but wrong for the heroes to accept too much? Or what is the right principle to follow, and what are the limitations that ought to govern a state's expression of honor to its heroes?

*Hints:* — 8. "Incident of the French Camp." Does Browning himself tell this story, or does he assume that a Frenchman tells it? How do you know? What picture do you get of Napoleon in the first stanza? What sense is there in giving his thoughts in the second stanza? Have they anything to do with the incident? What is the incident? Notice how it is told — a rider gallops up, alights, tells news which it takes the greatest nerve for him to stand up long enough to give. How is this made known to you? When he has delivered his message what effect does it have upon the Emperor which reveals the connection between his thoughts and such an incident? The last stanza adds to the effect of the story by showing that not even to the Emperor are his plans so important as to make him ignore this young soldier's sacrifice of his life for them.

*Queries for Discussion.* — In what does the climax

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of effect in this poem consist? In its portrayal of love of country, the glory of France, the character of Napoleon, or the devotion of the youth?

*Hints:* — 9. “Pheidippides.” Give first a sketch of the story. (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. XI., Notes, page 301.)

Do you get any idea from the first stanza as to the scene of the poem or who is speaking? All that is evident is that some one is paying reverence to his country and his gods, and especially to Pan, as a savior and patron. In the eighth line it appears that this person is addressing the Archons of Athens, standing alive before them, and in the eleventh we learn, by his repeating the order he had received from the Archons, who he was, and what he was ordered to do. From the way in which he describes his run to Athens, his breaking in upon the Spartans, and his feelings at the actions of the Spartans, should you say that this professional runner had the soul of a patriot? Observe (line 41) how he describes himself as saved from mouldering to ash only by the word “Athens” in Sparta’s reply. What further effect does Sparta’s perfidy have upon him? He even accuses the gods of his land of bad faith. To what will he give his allegiance in preference to them? Is his meeting with Pan the chief event of the poem? How does he say the god looked and spoke, and what does Pan give him as a pledge that he will help Athens? What further qualities of his character come out when Miltiades questions him as to the reward he is to receive himself? First his modesty in not relating what Pan had said of himself, and then his singleness of purpose in being satisfied with a reward that simply promised him release from the runner’s toil. Observe

the picture he draws of what he means to do after the Persians have been conquered. What actually happened to him after the battle of Marathon, showing that Pan had in mind a different sort of release from his toil from that Pheidippides had imagined?

Give an account of the Greek gods and goddesses mentioned in the poem. (See notes before cited. For further information, see Gayley's "Mythology in English Literature" or Smith's "Dictionary of Classical Mythology.") Which was the special tutelary deity of Athens? Give an account of the customs and superstitions mentioned.

*Queries for Discussion.* — If you had no other means of judging than this poem supplies, what should you say, from the character of Pheidippides, were the main characteristics of a patriot? Does it detract from the loyalty of Pheidippides at all that he does not take it in that the meed of his services will be death? What is the inner appropriateness to the theme of Pan, the rude earth-god being the best friend of Athens? Does it mean that to the crude primal instinct of attachment to the earth where one was born Athens owes her salvation? Is patriotism, because it is an elementary sentiment, likely to wane with the progress of civilization? Or is it capable of development, and how, do you think, ought it to be developed? — So that a Sparta may be concerned in the welfare of an Athens?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Why, and How the Deed Was Done.

*Hints :* — If you look through these poems you may see that in all of them, except "Donald," some risky act is undertaken that contributes to the general good.

The sportsman in "Donald" is seized with a sudden

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desire to wreak his pleasure on the stag, at an opportune moment, and no other considerations have any force beside that merely selfish instinct. A critical instant comes and a risk to run presents itself to the mind of Donald as to all the other actors in these poems, but Donald alone runs the risk and does his deed without some kindly or social impulse in view.

In "Muléykeh" Hóseyn is seized, at the opportune chance when his mare is within his reach, with the disinterested impulse, arising from his love and pride in her, which makes him act directly against his more selfish caution as her owner. But in this poem, as in "Donald," the story told is of an exciting event with an element of chance in it.

It may be said that these are poems of adventure therefore ; but are they poems of equal heroism ? And if one has more of the heroic in it than the other, which do you think it is, and how does it come out ? In drawing your conclusions compare with the other poems and ask how it is with these, also.

Because all are stories of exciting events with an element of chance, and lead to a risk willingly undertaken for the sake of some end the actors think good for others, are they, therefore, all equally heroic ? Notice the way the deeds were done and what they were done for in each case.

In "How They Brought the Good News," and "Through the Metidja," the object held in view by the riders is left a little vague. Still it is evident that the ride has, in both cases, a patriotic motive ; but is the peril equal ? What risk does the Arab rider run ? And ask, in comparison with his, what the risk is for Dirck and Joris and Roland's rider ; and who the real hero is who pays the price for the race to bring good

news to Aix. In each of the three horse-poems the horses share differently in the result ; show how. In how many of these poems are human beings alone concerned in the deed done, and in which is the human interest the least important ?

In "Hervé Riel," why the deed was done is as definite as the how. In "Echetlos" the why is implied. In the "Incident of a French Camp," is the way in which the young hero bears himself more important to the reader than what he does ? Is it the glory of France or devotion to his chief which inspires him ?

Compare the different heroes in the different poems : (1) as to whether they risk life or not, (2) whether the ends they seek are equally valuable, (3) whether they look for reward or not. Do you admire Hervé Riel more as Browning represents him, asking but for one day's leave, than as history records him, asking for a lifelong furlough ? (See Vol. IX., Notes, p. 302.)

In thinking over the situations presented in the remaining poems ask yourself in which the kindly motive — the desire to meet a personal risk for a social good is the most mixed with the necessity to do harm to some in order to do good to others ?

In "Hervé Riel," for example, the salvation of the French fleet is an annoyance and chagrin to the English, and in "Pheidippides" and "Echetlos" the heroism that helps the Athenians spites the Spartans and scatters the Persians, while the service done the Emperor and the glory won for France in planting the French colors in Ratisbon, however glorious and good from the French point of view, is disastrously meant for the German people. But in "Hervé Riel" is the benevolence accomplished for the French fraught



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with as much malevolence to the English as the heroism of the French youth in the "Incident of the French Camp" is to the German city? It might be said, from an unpartisan point of view, that an act of heroism in war is sometimes nobler, because more justifiable, under some circumstances than others.

Are all these poems written from a partisan point of view? — that is, is the way of looking at the deed Athenian in "Pheidippides" and French in the French poems, or are there any indications that the deed itself is more enthusiastically dwelt upon in "Hervé Riel," and the characters of the Youth and the Emperor, rather more than the deed alone, in the "Incident of the French Camp?"

*Queries for Discussion.* — Does the blind unconsciousness of their deeds on the part of Roland and Tray make them less or more heroic in your opinion than Hervé, Pheidippides, the French boy, or the Greek peasant? Are such acts finer in proportion to the unconsciousness of risk, or to the regardlessness of risk? Is the human being capable, therefore, of greater possibilities of heroism and cowardice because he is aware of the peril and understands better what end he seeks to accomplish?

Is the service done by a Hervé Riel in rescuing his country's navy from destruction more exalting because it is a deed that saves life than that of the French youth who helps his emperor in aggressive action against life? Should you say that an act of heroism appealing to the universal heart was necessarily more impressive than one making a partisan appeal or not?

In estimating the value of heroism in thrilling the spirit, is why the deed is done more important than how it is done? In the poet's art of telling a story



effectively, it might depend more on the way of telling it, and on whether the poet meant to lay his emphasis on the character of the actors, or on the quality of their heroism.

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Historical Background.

*Hints :* — In considering what historical background these poems have, the stories they tell or the imagination or skill of the poet in telling them may be put aside, and the elements of actual life-experience out of which the poems were made remain to be kept in view. It may then be seen that these foundation-elements of life-experience are of several kinds. There may be some historical event or occurrences belonging to the social life of man out of which the poem arose ; or there may be some other poem or story or tradition on which this one is founded, in which case, social life or the general human experience is still the source of the poem, but pushed a step farther back ; or, there may be, at the root of it, some experience of life belonging to a single person. The first is what is commonly understood to be the historical source ; the second, the literary ; the third is ordinarily spoken of as biographical. But all are alike traceable to that prior experience of life which may be called, broadly speaking, the historical background. Bearing this in mind, we may find some interesting differences in the kind of historical background these poems have. Asking now, for example, what foundation in history there was for “ How they brought the Good News,” we find, first, that Browning denied any exact basis for the particular occurrence told (see what he says in notes to the poem in the *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IV., p. 362), and yet that the story is connected not merely

with two real cities but with a very interesting chapter in the history of modern Europe ; and that this incident, which Browning imagined, is a probable one which might easily have been a real one, arising out of the siege of Aix and the union of Ghent with Aix to resist the despotic control of Spain ; and that all this, although it does not enter directly into the story of the poem, makes a sort of framework for it. If you like to know what the alliance of Holland and the other States of the Netherlands against Philip II. meant in modern history, and what it accomplished, turn to Motley's " Rise of the Dutch Republic," chapter viii. To the historic framework surrounding this little poem we owe thus a picturesque side-light. But you will see that the poem does not celebrate this historical line of events. It is the carrying of the good news, and not the news itself or its effects, which is the main thing here. What Browning says about the origin of this poem, too (see notes cited), assures us that he has made more use of life in the shape of his own personal experience in riding " York," than he has of life in the shape of historical or social experience. Still, this personal experience could scarcely be called autobiographical as it stands in the poem, here. It is to be noticed that although he has made more use of one than the other, he has made use both of personal and historical life in the same way, — that is, indirectly.

In " Through the Metidja " there is scarcely even an indirect use of personal experience ; but this poem more distinctly, but still indirectly, makes use of social experience. It involves another interesting bit of historical life, still more modern, belonging to the present century and connected with a class of events still taking place, the subjugation, by the

stronger and more civilized nations, of the weaker and less developed races. In this case it is the colonization of Algeria by France which led to the repeated uprisings of the wild Arab tribes of this part of North Africa, led by their able and noble chieftain Abd-el-Kadr, against the French invaders of their country. (See *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, Vol. IV., p. 363, for the dates and the main events in Abd-el-Kadr's career.) Notice how indefinitely, and yet picturesquely Browning has used this historical background, what allusions to the events of the Algerian revolt, to the Arab character, customs, and religion he has woven into the poem, and the atmosphere of sympathy with which he has surrounded this desperately loyal subject of the Arab chief.

In comparison with these two poems what sort of historical background may the other horse-poem, "Muléykeh," the two other animal-poems, "Donald," and "Tray" and the four remaining war-incident poems be said to have? Should you say that the sort of historical element underlying the first two poems was of that sub-class of literary source which rests on a folk-story or some such traditional tale? Can you judge what sort of literary source a story has, even if you do not know just what the original of that particular story was? How does the incident from which "Tray" arose (see notes to that poem, *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. XI., p. 306), differ from the older traditional tale of "Donald" and the still older one of "Muléykeh," or the ancient classic stories of "Echelos" and "Pheidippides?" (See notes, *Camberwell Browning*, for information as to these.) Show in each case what use the poet has made of the historical element; how he has enlivened and enriched it, and made

it savor of its original country and nationality ; and to what end he has adapted it. Are the later poems of this series more complex in their historical, racial, or moral interest, than the earlier ones ? Bring this out more fully.

*Queries for Discussion.* — Does the actual occurrence of any incident told of in a poem make it more vivid and interesting or not ? Give the reasons in favor of historical accuracy on the one side, and the superiority of fact over fancy ; and then, on the other side, bring out all that may be said in favor of the literary use of history, and the truth to life that may be attained by an artistic use of the imagination : and then ask which gives you the truer view of life, history or literature ?

Is the direct way of relating historical or personal events any more effective or lifelike than the indirect ? Or does that question also depend upon the manipulation and the point of view ? Give examples of the direct and indirect. Are any of this series of poems directly told ? Is "Donald" an example of direct relation, or does it only assume to be an experience of the poet's own in story-telling in a Highland bothie ?

IV. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— The Artistry of the Poems.

[We use this word, "artistry," because it is used by Browning in "The Ring and the Book" to denote the fashioning of the poem out of the raw material of fact or thought and is more appropriate because more special than the word "art."]

*Hints* : — Concerning the rhythm of "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix," Joaquin Miller tells this interesting little anecdote. He had been invited by the Archbishop of Dublin to meet Browning, Dean Stanley, Houghton, and others.

“Two of the archbishop’s beautiful daughters had been riding in the park with the Earl of Aberdeen. ‘And did you gallop?’ asked Browning of the younger beauty. ‘I galloped, Joyce [Dirck] galloped, we galloped all three.’ Then we all laughed at the happy and hearty retort, and Browning, beating the time and clang of galloping horses’ feet on the table with his fingers, repeated the exact measure in Latin from Virgil; and the archbishop laughingly took it up, in Latin, where he left off. I then told Browning I had an order — it was my first — for a poem, from the *Oxford Magazine*, and would like to borrow the measure and spirit of his ‘Good News’ for a prairie fire on the plains, driving buffalo and all other life before it into the river. ‘Why not borrow from Virgil as I did? He is as rich as one of your gold mines, while I am but a poor scribe.’” The line Browning quoted from Virgil was probably the celebrated one descriptive of galloping horses: “*Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.*” Notice, however, that Browning has adapted this metre to suit himself. Instead of making Virgil’s line of dactylic feet (one accented and two unaccented syllables) ending with a spondee, he begins his lines always with one or two extra unaccented syllables, and always ends the line with an extra accented syllable. By some, this poem is scanned as anapaestic (two syllables unaccented and one accented) ending with an iamb and sometimes beginning with an iamb (an unaccented and an accented syllable.) But we think it will be found that a delicate perception of sound will dictate the scanning of the poem as dactylic, even if we had not Browning’s word for it that he borrowed the rhythm of it from Virgil. In reading the poem one feels that to a certain extent it

imitates the gallop of horses. Is this entirely due to the dactylic measure? If this were so, then dactyls would always suggest galloping horses. (Compare the metre of Longfellow's "Evangeline.") The suggestion is probably gained more definitely through the regular recurrence of the final accented syllable to every line by means of which the sharp and regular rhythm of a gallop is conveyed. The rhyming couplets also add to the rhythmic regularity: Is an atmosphere of haste given to the poem by the direct way in which the story is told?

Where are there any examples of poetic ornament, and what are they? (See lines 4, 5, 15, 19, 24, 39, 40, 41, 47.) Are there any allusions in the poem which do not naturally grow out of the subject, like the references to the places they passed on their ride?

"Through the Metidja" also suggests the swift pace of a horse, but the effect is gained in a very different way. The first thing you will notice about this poem is that it has but one rhyme sound all through, and that only one word, "ride," is repeated; further, beside the end rhymes, there are a number of internal rhymes. Contrast the rhythm of this poem with that of the preceding poem and notice that it is anapaestic with two feet in each line for the greater part of the poem, but that some of the lines are longer, having three feet, one anapaestic, and two iambic. Point out these longer lines. Miss Ethel Davis, writing in *Poet-lore* (August-September, 1893, Vol. V, p. 436), says of this poem: "On the first reading of 'Through the Metidja,' the twinship of form and matter is perhaps the most strongly marked. One hears in the opening verse no word to picture the horse that car-



ries the speaker, but at once he becomes the central figure of the poem. His beating hoofs exhilarate, and the fresh, clear air animates, in spite of lines which in themselves would surround the rider with dust and heat. The man himself would be forgotten but for the added length of the sixth line. In that the motion of the steed is gone, and one is brought back to the fact that the thought dominates the gallop."

Is the undoubted prominence of the horse in this poem due to the constant recurrence in the rhymes of the "i" sound, reminding one of the fact of the riding, as well as to the constant refrain "as I ride?" Should you say that the rhythm suggested galloping, or a more steady swing? Upon this Mr. Bulkeley says (London Browning Society Papers): "What a journey the Arab gets through with in the course of the day with his long easy strides!" As well as the stress on the accented syllables of the verse, they also have quantity, the "i" sound being a very long sound. Compare this with the preceding poem as to poetical ornaments.

"Muléykeh." The line in this poem has six accents, the majority of the feet being iambic, but there is a good deal of irregularity. For example, in the very first line there are two anapaestic feet:

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~  
If a stranger passed the tent of Hóseyn, he cried "Ā churl's."

Again, line 3 begins with a trochaic foot and the last foot is anapaestic:

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~  
"Nay would a friend exclaim, he needs nor pity nor scorn."

Point out all such irregularities. Are there any perfectly regular lines? The variety given to the stanza by the irregularities is added to by the



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rhyme scheme which does not obtrude itself as in the previous poems. Notice that the first and fourth, second and third, third and sixth lines rhyme. Is there much ornamentation of the verse in this poem? Is there any other line or phrase in the poem as beautiful as line 72? Of this line Mr. Bulkeley writes "How admirably not only the swiftness of Muléykeh as she dashes past us to the goal, but, what we chiefly see, the hairy amplitude of the long tail and the rush of the hoofs, are brought before us."

"Donald" presents still another variety of rhythm and rhyming. In the first stanza, each line has three accents, and anapaestic and iambic feet mixed. Notice also that every line ends with an extra short syllable (called a weak or feminine ending), and that the rhymes are in the second and fourth lines. Compare the remaining stanzas with this first one, and notice all the variations from it that may occur. When the story reaches its climax notice that the speaker uses the present tense instead of the past, which he has been using, and that Donald's own words are given directly. There is also considerable variation of the rhythm. See, for examples, lines 189 to 196.

Is poetic imagery any more characteristic of this poem than of the preceding?

"Tray." The principal irregularities of rhythm in this poem are in the first stanza where the fifth line is broken off after three feet so that it does not rhyme with the first and second lines as in all the other stanzas, and the double rhymes ending in weak syllables, in lines 6, 9, 10, 28, and 29. Point out what the normal form of the verse is and any other variations you may discover in it.

"Hervé Riel." This poem is very fine as to rhythm,

rhyme, and stanza-form. The majority of the lines have four stresses; but a good many have only two, and several have three. The feet vary from one to three unaccented syllables followed by an accented syllable. In line 75 there is even a foot with five unaccented syllables, thus :

“ Keeps the passage as its inch of way were the wide seas profound.”

Many of the short lines might be scanned as if they had three feet, thus :

“ Then was called a council straight.”

but the ear tells one that such a line is more in harmony with the rest of the verse if scanned —

“ Then was called a council straight.”

The effect of all these short syllables is to reflect the excitement of the situation and the necessity for quick and decisive action.

Notice that the stanzas vary in length just as paragraphs in prose might, each stanza taking up a fresh phase of the story. Compare the rhyming of the different stanzas with each other and notice also the examples of alliteration. Compare with the other poems in this respect.

“ Echetlos ” is comparatively simple in its form, stanzas of three lines, all of which rhyme with each other. The lines have six feet, mostly iambic, but notice the variations.

“ Incident of the French Camp.” Notice how simple the rhyme and rhythm is in this, compared with “ Hervé Riel,” for example. The lines regularly alternate between four accents and three accents, and the rhymes also alternate.

“Pheidippides.” The peculiarity of this poem is that, although the rhythm is iambic, most of the lines begin with an accented syllable, sometimes followed by two unaccented, sometimes by one unaccented syllable.

The rhymes are also distributed in a very curious way. The first line rhymes with the seventh, the second with the eighth, the third with the sixth and the fourth with the fifth. Writing on “Browning’s Poetic Form” in *Poet-love* (Vol. II., p. 234, June, 1890), Dr. D. G. Brinton says: “Not unfrequently, Browning employs rhyme in such a manner that one must regard it merely as a means of heightening his secondary rhythm. The rhyming words are so far apart that we are aware only of a faint but melodious echo. The always artificial and somewhat mechanical effect of rhyme is thus avoided, while its rhythmic essence is retained. I illustrate this by a verse from ‘Pheidippides;’ a masterpiece of artistic skill.”

Does the language in this poem appear to you to be richer and fuller than in any of the preceding poems? Is this due to the nature and setting of the subject, or to the use of poetical imagery?

*Query for Discussion.* — From the study of these poems, should you think Browning was lacking in poetic form, as some people have said, or should you think rather that he showed consummate skill in adapting his form to the needs of his thought?

## FOLK POEMS

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### I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*

— Sketch of the Subject-matter of the Poems. For help in this see notes to *Camberwell Browning* as referred to above.

### II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*

— How the Story is Told.

*Hints* : — With the exception of "Ponte dell' Angelo" and "The Pope and the Net," these poems are all told in the simplest narrative style, and these two are merely given a semblance of the dramatic monologue form, the former by the fact that the story is put into the mouth of the person who is rowing the boat, evidently the poet, and the latter, by its being put into the mouth of a visitor to the Pope in question. In either of these cases does the character of the speaker affect the point of the poem in any way? When a poem is told as a simple story, it gives the narrator an opportunity to intersperse comments of his own about the story. Are there any

such comments in "The Boy and the Angel?" In "The Twins," before the poet begins the little story, he expresses an opinion of Martin Luther and the sort of fables he used to write — so pointed in their moral that they stuck like burs. In the "Pied Piper," the only comment made by the poet is at the end where he addresses his little friend Willie Macready in regard to the moral to be drawn from the story. In the three last stanzas of "Gold Hair" the poet also draws a moral. Does he intrude any remarks of his own throughout the rest of the poem? In "The Cardinal and the Dog" how much does the poet himself appear? In "The Bean Feast" he expresses an opinion as to the story he is going to tell; what is it? And in "Muckle-Mouth Meg" the poet is not obtruded at all. Although the poems are all in simple narrative style, most of them are enlivened by quotations which give them a dramatic effect. In which of these poems under consideration is this dramatic effect most marked?

*Query for Discussion.* — Since a dramatic effect is gained both in the narrative poems and those in monologue form, what is the real difference between them?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— The Folk-lore of these Poems.

Of all these poems the only one that is purely imaginary is "The Boy and the Angel." For suggestions as to the sources of the others, see notes to *Camberwell Browning* as given above. Observe the differences in the nature of the stories. Some tell only of possible events, others have imaginative elements in them.

Of the imaginative stories is there any more probable than another? What are the imaginative elements in each of the stories and what is their source?

In "The Pied Piper of Hamelin" the imaginative element is, of course, the effect of the piper's music on the rats and then upon the children. What stories in mythology does this remind you of, and what is the explanation of such stories? See "Hymn to Hermes," translated by Shelley, also Mercury, Arion, Orpheus, in Gayley's "Classic Myths in English Literature." These are myths of the wind as a musician; Hermes, or the wind, is also the leader of souls to Hades after death. There are also many traces in folk-stories of a belief in the idea that the soul escaped from the body in the form of some little animal, a mouse or a bird. The story of the "Pied Piper" combines all these mythical elements in a setting of reality. In the story of "Gold Hair," it seems so improbable that the girl should be able to hide the gold coins in her hair that this story may be said to have an imaginative element in it, also. In "The Cardinal and the Dog" the big black dog might be explained as a subjective hallucination due to a diseased state of the mind, but in a superstitious age such appearances of a disordered brain were considered veritable visions from the other world. In this case the dog was an emissary of the Devil come to claim his own, as mentioned in the notes in the *Camberwell Browning*. (See Fiske, "Myths and Myth-makers" and Cox, "Mythology of the Aryan Nations," for further information upon these mythical dogs.)

Or it might be explained simply as a story invented by the Protestants, through their superstitious horror over his illness and death, to cast discredit upon this Cardinal, who was especially their enemy. Which do you think the most likely?

In "Ponte dell' Angelo" the imaginative element is prominent and evidently belongs to the order of legend called explanatory, that is, it was probably invented to account for the figure of the guardian angel.

The poet has not worked up the subject matter in any of these poems, but has simply put into verse the stories as he found them.

*Queries for Discussion.*—Which do you find the most entertaining of these stories, — those with or those without imaginative elements? Are there qualities in "The Boy and the Angel," Browning's own invention, that place it above all the other poems? What should you say they were?

IV. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
—The Inner Meaning of the Poems.

*Hints:* — The simplicity belonging to the story and way of telling it in this series of poetic tales belongs also to the meaning. "Muckle-Mouth Meg" cannot be said to have any deeper design than to be lively and amusing. The moral lesson brought out in the last stanza of "The Pied Piper" is so hackneyed a maxim that it is put jokingly, the forced rhyme assisting, to let the reader see that the poet is laughingly in earnest while he points the moral and holds up a warning finger over the mischief befalling the man who refuses to pay the piper.

Which of the other poems are entirely humorous in their aim and implications? What should you say was the moral of "The Pope and the Net?" That humility was a useless virtue except for the lower clergy? Or is the poem susceptible of a less jocular moral turn? The virtues of another sort of a prelate are illustrated in "The Bean Feast." This Pope professed humility even after he became Pope, and



when it was not only of no advantage to himself but was of advantage to others. Yet, although the popular story of this good Pope is told in a more earnest way, so that the lovable and benevolent qualities of the kindly man arouse a glow of genuine esteem for him which is, in itself, essentially moral, it may be noticed that the canny Pope who made humility useful to himself instead of to others, is written about in a similar broad and tolerant vein, as if the human characteristics of each Pope, despite the fact that one was morally superior to the other, were almost equally enjoyable to the poet, and made so, also, by his treatment of the two stories, to the reader. Do the two stories enhance each other, when their inner bearing with respect to these two contrasting characters is brought out? It is not unusual for Browning to hang his portraits in this way, putting two different types side by side, as companion pieces.

Why is the "Ponte dell' Angelo" story the most naïve of all these folk-stories in its moral implication? Notice that the unethical conduct of the lawyer in fleecing all his clients is counterbalanced by his prayers to the Madonna, so that the story leaves it to be supposed that God's fit punishment may be delayed repeatedly and finally remitted altogether through due observance of church ceremonies. What do you think about the morality of this?

"Gold Hair" has perhaps a quizzical quality. It is ironical, half in earnest, but meaning something a little different from what is expressly said. It is written with a kind of teasing enjoyment, on the poet's part, of a pious anecdote of a simple-minded Catholic family. So perhaps is "The Cardinal and the Dog," written with a similar relish for Protestant

simple-mindedness in the credulity over the apparition sent to scourge the enormous wickedness of the Cardinal, whose crime it was to be on the other side in the great church controversy and its most staunch and able friend. But how do you guess this? The poem is written entirely from the credulous standpoint, and the last line is in accord with this too, and yet it suggests that the story is a partisan one. In the case of "Gold Hair" a more skeptical point of view is insinuated — the point of view of the hearers of the legend in an "after-time" (see lines 56-60), when the "mouth might twitch with a dubious smile." This quizzical quality underlying the narration of the story is not without a sober twist at the end (lines 136-150), which leaves one in doubt again whether or not a more serious moral is intended? What are you inclined to think about this? Is the poet really of the opinion that the heart is desperately wicked, or is he even here only pretending to be serious? If so, what is his meaning here? Is he really more amused than shocked over the miserliness of the girl, and disposed to sympathize with her attachment to the things of earth? And what does his professed edification amount to then? Does he assent to the doctrine of original sin, while meaning something a little different — that the human heart is necessarily human, and full of earthly longings and is likely to be unnatural or perhaps hypocritical if it assumes to care only for heaven?

Which of the remaining poems of this series are perfectly serious in their moral implication? Is the sportiveness which has been noticed due in all cases to the introduction somewhere in the poem of the poet's or some other point of view than that of the original story-teller? Which stories are told the most simply and directly?

“The Boy and the Angel,” which is evidently deeper and richer in its inner meaning than any of the other poems, is told with absolute simplicity and without any of the doubleness belonging to most of the others ; yet it is to be noticed that the most pointed of its couplets is given, in parenthesis, as a comment of the narrator’s ; and it happens that this was a later addition to the poem, first appearing in 1863. It is interesting, too, to learn that various other little touches that have deepened its significance were added, after its first appearance in *Hood’s Magazine* in 1845, upon its inclusion, later in the same year, in the Bells and Pomegranates Series, with other poems which we know were revised and sometimes changed in accordance with the criticism of Elizabeth Barrett, who read the proofs. There is a passing mention in a letter of hers to Browning (August 30, 1845, see “Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett,” vol. i. p. 180), which leads to the inference that she thought the inner meaning of this poem was open to objection on the score of its portrayal of the angel Gabriel. Later (p. 261), she says, “ ‘Theocrite’ overtakes that wish of mine which ran on so fast.” The main alterations made in the second version were : the addition of lines 55–58, 63 and 64, 67 and 68, 71 and 72, and the final couplet, and the omission after line 74 of the following couplet :

“Be again the boy all curled ;  
I will finish with the world.”

There were a few other slighter alterations which served to make the verse more regular without affecting the inner significance of the poem, but these cited seem designed either to make the story clearer, by

detailing how the change was brought about, as in lines 55 to 58, 63 and 64, or to render it more unmistakable that the moral lesson implied is not the hopeless superiority of the angelic over the human but rather the inimitable excellence of the human which uplifts it and sets it side by side with the angelic. Theocrite's "little human praise" had a quality so distinctly its own that Gabriel's best efforts to rival it were ineffectual. It was then in reality not at all inferior or to be disdained; and the emphasis is laid not on the point that it was useless or presumptuous for Theocrite to wish to praise God the "Great-way" as Pope, but rather on the point that not even angelic power can displace the human. The omission of the couplet quoted tends to redeem the archangel from any assumption of superiority or charge of officiousness, and the couplet finally added puts boy and angel on the same level as twin spirits in God's praise, the human and the angelic not seeking to outrival but to supplement one another, — "They sought God, side by side."

*Queries for Discussion.* — Do you think these alterations are improvements? Do they justify themselves by preventing the poem from being mistaken as leading merely to the hackneyed moral that every one must stay in the place to which he was born? Is the spirit of the poem aristocratic in the sense that it shows that all cannot be equal, or is it democratic, in the sense that it shows that place or rank is unimportant and that different personalities, because each is of unique value, are equal and never to be superseded by any other? Mr. George Willis Cooke says of this poem: "The lesson is the same as that of 'Pippa Passes,' 'All service ranks the same with God,' and therefore we are not to seek to escape from the tasks assigned

to us." Do you agree with this? But does not the poem intimate, on the contrary, that in this case, at any rate, all service did not rank the same with God, since he missed in Gabriel's praise a quality that only Theocrite's had? and does it follow, if it be accepted that the moral is essentially the same, that therefore "we are not to seek to escape from the tasks assigned us"? Or do you think that Elizabeth Barrett's quarrel with the original version of the poem may really have been that its inner significance might be misinterpreted in this way? Do the alterations tend to make clear what the poet's design really amounts to? And do you think that this design is to illustrate the value and significance to God of each and every human individuality? But, in that case, why was not Theocrite's praise of God when he was Pope as grateful as when he was a boy at his work-bench? Or is this merely because his office as Pope was not his own, but thrust on him by the angel, so that the drift of the poem remains the same, without emphasis upon the question of rank, but only upon the question of individual worth?

The interpretation of "Gold Hair" suggested in the "Hints" on that poem is that the naïveté of the guide-book story amused the poet, while he detected in it, despite its simplicity, a wise kernel of perpetual truth, the truth belonging to a keen observation of human foibles. So, in re-telling the legend he gives it a whimsical cast, but half accepts its old-time pious reflection upon the weaknesses of mortality, yet not without managing to convey another more modern and more tolerant way of regarding such weaknesses, as frailties so natural to the flesh that sin and blame scarcely belong to them, so much as suspicion does to all the pretences of

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humanity to be saintly. Are you inclined to think this the right interpretation or not? Will any other interpretation account as well for the humor of the poem? Why not? Does it agree, in a way characteristic of Browning, with the view of the human presented in "The Boy and the Angel," as having a distinct quality of its own through differing from the heavenly which it must in vain strive to rival? But do you think it morally good for man that he should accept such a view of human nature? Would it be better for him to take the old pious view and be deceived, if it be deception, and to think that he may become perfect, for fear lest he cease to attempt to improve? Or, do you think it best for a human being to be clear-sighted enough to recognize his merely human limitations and yet to struggle to attain the utmost possible degree of development?

V. *Topic for Paper, Private Study, or Classwork.*  
— The Art of the Poems.

*Hints* : — The art-form in "The Boy and the Angel" is very simple. The lines have four stresses, and each stanza has two lines rhymed. There is some variation in the distribution of the stresses. Sometimes the first syllable in the line is accented, when the line is seven syllables in length, and sometimes the second syllable is accented. There are a few places where each syllable is accented without any unaccented syllable between, for example in line 2, where "Praise" and "God" both have an accent, and in line 19, where every syllable is accented. Is there any other line in the poem where "Praise God" is differently accented? The language all through this poem is exceedingly simple. The comparison in line 25, "Like a rainbow's birth" is the



only one in the poem, is it not? Is there not a certain charm in this very simple language exactly suited to the subject?

In "The Twins" the rhyme and rhythm scheme is also very simple, the lines having three stresses and the first and third, second and fourth lines rhyming. Notice if there are any variations in the distribution of the short lines.

In the "Pied Piper" the lines usually have four stresses, but the unaccented syllables are distributed very irregularly. Point out all the lines you find with a different number of accents. Point out the two-syllabled rhymes ending in short syllables, weak endings as they are called. Is there any regularity about the distribution of the rhymes? About the length of the stanzas? Are the shorter lines introduced at stated places. The effect of all this variation of form is to make the poem bright and rapid in movement.

"Gold Hair" has lines with four stresses sometimes preceded by one, sometimes by two unaccented syllables. The very first stanza, however, begins with an accented syllable followed by a pause. Are there any other examples of this in the poem? There are also some lines beginning with an accented syllable and followed by a short syllable. The last line in each stanza, however, the fifth, has only three stresses.

Is the fifth stanza of this poem the most poetical on account of its comparison between the sunset sky and the death of Gold-Hair? Are there any other examples of poetical figures in the poem?

In "The Cardinal and the Dog" the lines have seven stresses, the accented syllable being preceded by an unaccented one. In some cases the accent falls on syllables that seem short, while a syllable that seems



long is unaccented; for example in the first line "the" is accented, and the word next to it, "high," is unaccented. Do you find any other examples of this? Do you object to the roughness of this sort of accenting, or does it remind you of the early English ballad form, and so give a quaintness to the poem in keeping with the subject. Point out those lines which end with a short unaccented syllable. Notice that the stanzas are of different lengths. Also that the rhyme scheme is different for each stanza.

In "Ponte dell' Angelo" all the lines except the last have four stresses and that has three. Point out all the variations you observe in the distribution of the short syllables. What is the rhyme scheme? Are there any poetical figures in the poem?

In "The Bean Feast" the lines have six stresses with a short syllable preceding the accented syllable, with some variations. For example, line 1 begins with an accented syllable followed by an unaccented one. Almost every line has also an extra short syllable after the accented syllable in the middle of the line, and sometimes two extra short syllables. Point out all such places and notice how the regularity of this irregularity adds to the rhythmical effect of the poem. The rhyme scheme is simple. Are there any bad rhymes in the poem? Is the rhythm of the "Pope and the Net" similar to that of "The Bean Feast." Point out any differences you may observe, also the difference in the length of the stanza and the rhymes. In "Muckle-Mouth Meg" the lines alternate between three and four stresses, preceded sometimes by two and sometimes by one unaccented syllable. There are two rhymes to each stanza, alternating lines rhyming together. Sometimes the

rhymes are double, in which case the line ends with an extra short syllable. Is there any regularity in the distribution of the double and single rhymes? From the study of the distribution of stresses and unaccented syllables in these poems in how many different kinds of metre are they? Does the poet use alliteration much in any of them? What allusions are there (see Notes, *Camberwell Browning*), and what sort of relation do they bear to the subject matter?

*Queries for Discussion.* — Upon what do these poems depend chiefly for their poetical effect, rhythm and rhyme, poetic ornamentation, the imaginative quality of the subject-matter, their humor or the terse dramatic way in which they are told?

Is there any one of the group that you like better than all the rest, if so why? Or do you like each one for its own special qualities?

## PHASES OF ROMANTIC LOVE

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I. *Topic for Paper, Private Study, or Classwork.*  
 — The Life of Love Illustrated in Browning's Shorter Poems.

*Hints* : — Characterize the various phases of love brought into light, grouping together those which have some mood or trait in common. The slighter and more evanescent moods of "Inapprehensiveness," and the sonnet, "Eyes, calm beside thee" may be said to belong to latent love. Not the passion itself but the suppression of the passion felt to be ready to spring into life is what is expressed in both of these poems. Notice also whether the expression is direct, whether it is the possible lover who speaks and tells the story of his own mood, and whether in both cases the mood is betrayed in a purely lyrical form, or how? What other poems of this series may be classed with these on the score that they reveal a nascent or possible but undeveloped love? In "Garden Fancies" the love portrayed has reached a later stage of development and yet still is in its dawn, and others of the poems may be classed with these. If you decide that "A Likeness," "St. Martin's Summer," "Youth and Art," "Dis Aliter Visum," "Evelyn Hope," "Too Late" also belong to this class; observe and point out which are the nearest like the first in the slight character of the emotion betrayed; and also

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what, besides their general resemblance, are the differences among these in respect to the various circumstances which have checked or determined the development of the initial attraction. "A Likeness," for example, is the veiled expression of a teasing memory of a special personal attraction secretly cherished, which has been called up in the possible lover's mind by such chance incidents as the poem relates, but which no one guesses and which is kept unacknowledged. In all the other poems just mentioned the phases of love shown have been affected by obstacles of various sorts. In "Youth and Art," and "Dis Aliter Visum" the dawning attraction of the lovers for one another has been checked in its development by worldly considerations. In "Evelyn Hope" the death, and in "Too Late" the marriage and at last the death of the beloved woman have hindered the lovers' avowals, but instead of being strong enough to check the development of feeling, they have served instead to awaken the lover to a more poignant realization of its nature and promise. In "St. Martin's Summer" quite another sort of obstacle thwarts the development of the awakening attraction. The remembrance of a deep and rich love, now past, besides which any other seems but an imitation and pale reflection, intervenes like a ghost to cast over the present love a shadow of discredit. "Which?" "Numpholeptos," "A Pretty Woman," belong in a class by themselves because they seem rather to be concerned with the idea of love than with a specific personal impression. Therefore, it will be well to discuss these more particularly under the following topic. But of all the other poems cited in this group, do any express a phase of love which has been left

dormant or has reached little more than a nascent stage? If you think none do, you may class the rest together as expressive of fully awakened love, and then consider under what different conditions this love is manifested; and also, what various phases of love are portrayed, as jealous love in "The Laboratory," betrayed love in "The Confessional," subjected love in "A Woman's Last Word," specious love in "A Light Woman," and love triumphing over obstacles of various sorts, or affected by them more or less fatally in the others.

Which of these poems are the more complex in their *personnel*? For example, in some of the poems of both of these two classes of latent and awakened love, the expression of love the poem gives involves nobody but the two lovers. In others it is the entrance of the outer world upon the scene, either in the shape of other persons who actually take a part in the poem or of personal considerations which affect it indirectly, or merely as an external influence in the mind of the lover, which occasions or qualifies the outpouring of expression. Again, it may be noticed that this entrance of external influences under these different guises leads to various effects: it may help to make the love stronger or more conscious, or may tend to create the difficulties which beset its development.

Illustrate in the poems the different varieties of movement in the story and the ways in which the love and its expression is accordingly affected. Other actors besides the lovers, outer influences too, for instance, thwart the love and make it lead to tragical conclusions in a large group of these poems, — "The Confessional," "The Laboratory," "In a Gondola," "Porphyria's Lover," "In a Balcony," "Cristina

and Monaldeschi." In what respects does "A Light Woman" belong to this group, and wherein does it differ from it? In which among these poems are the lovers affected by the outer influence so that they themselves share in bringing about the tragedy, and thus add to the emotional intensity? Outer influences of still another class make both the rapturous mood and the actual separation between the lovers in "Love among the Ruins" and "Bifurcation." Ideals of duty, in the one case, based upon social life, intervene to disjoin the lovers, and in the other the intrusion upon their happiness of the larger social life and the imposing achievements of the past but serves to make felt the more vitally their intensely human and merely personal emotion. "Solomon and Balkis" classes with these poems in the one respect that it touches on the effect of self-indulgence and worldly importance upon a personal relation. It satirizes the sort of love-susceptibility growing in a vitiated way from such roots of external influence, and shows its merely physical quality. Again in "Rosny" an external ideal of fame and honor uses love as its instrument and sends the lover to his death. In "Two in the Campagna" a mood of the subtlest nature intervenes between the lovers. It is an external influence that is absolutely immaterial and impersonal, felt to belong to the infinite, because so vague and large and elusive, and yet interposing a nameless bafflement upon the human yearning to encompass all within its love. In "Mesmerism" personal love is brought into a similar subtle contact with mysterious influences which it would subordinate to the service of personal desire to the extent of gaining a dominance felt to be an unlawful usurpation over the loved one's will. Compare with



these poems of conflict between love and external influences of some sort, the little group of poems expressing the conflict of love with the merely personal disagreements and selfishnesses of the lovers—"A Lovers' Quarrel," "A Woman's Last Word," "Another Way of Love," and "In a Year," noticing how in all of these discord arises, and how far it goes towards either the destruction of love, the subjugation of one personality by the other, or a reaction of one against the other. "The Lost Mistress," "A Serenade," "Cristina," "Mary Wollstonecraft," and "The Last Ride Together" are alike in relating nothing of the external or internal sources of friction disturbing the love-relation, and in expressing in various ways the triumph of love over all slights and without self-abasement in the soul of the rejected lover. Notice throughout these poems how far they make known the different points of view of the two lovers concerned and also how the selfish subjugation of one by the other, as in "A Woman's Last Word," does not permit the attainment of such strength and psychological victory on the part of the less loved lover as the spiritual isolation of the lover in "Cristina."

"One Way of Love" and "Another Way of Love," also "In Three Days" and "In a Year," seem to have been written as companion poems expressing supplementary phases of love, the one pair of poems presenting the opposite points of view toward love of two different kinds of lovers; the second pair, of two points of view, the one a man's, the other the woman's, in the history of what may have been the same love, affected by time and change. It is a woman who speaks in "In a Year;" but is it justifiable to suppose that in these two contrasted poems

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the two points of view are compared and meant to be characteristic of any woman's and any man's nature, or does Browning's treatment of love forbid the supposition that it is always the man who is inconstant? Is he right or mistaken in this? In the lover of "Cristina" and of "One Way of Love" has he portrayed an attitude of constancy and purely psychical love maintained without any return and in the face of neglect which would be impossible in a man? Compare with "Mary Wollstonecraft." Compare with Browning's other rejected lovers.

*Queries for Discussion.* — Is Browning's treatment of love characterized by a wider range and greater complexity than is usual in love-poems? Compare as to range and complexity with any modern poets; for example, William Morris, Tennyson, Emerson, Whitman, Lowell, Poe, Kipling, etc.

It has been said by some who have admitted the wider range of Browning that his very variety is a sign of a certain aloofness of the poet from the emotions he depicts; that they are not his direct emotions, but his exploited emotions, the personal basis all art must have being deflected and rearranged to suit the imagined points of view of different souls; and that they are, therefore, externalized and shaped too much by the intellect, the outcome growing too cold to stir us. As Dr. Brinton says (see "Facettes of Love from Browning," *Poet-lore*, Vol. I. pp. 1-28, Jan., 1889), "We can find many powerful and trenchant portrayals of passion in his pages, yet his lines rarely cause to vibrate a similar chord in the human heart." This writer concludes that his love poems fail to touch the heart and that they fail because "his intellectual nature constantly interferes with the full and free ex-

pression of the emotions," his theory of dramatic workmanship excluding direct self-expression, his public feels the poet's detachment, and the falsity of a theory of art which involves a sensitive shyness on the part of the poet himself.

But is it true that Browning's love poems do not touch his readers? Have they a quality of their own, which, although it may be discriminated as different in kind as well as in degree and variety from the poems of most other poets, is neither inferior in force and ardor, nor without an underlying basis of genuine and vital personal experience? If they have a recognizable quality of this nature can the theory of art which would exclude his theory as defective be held to without narrowness? Would not a theory of art which recognized the inherent value of the two methods, of both the direct and the indirect use in art of personal experience, be the better to hold to, and justify the conclusion that the art decried, instead of being wrong, was an accession to literature of a rare and original sort? But is it altogether unprecedented? Are there prototypes of this variety in other dramatic art? Is not the intellect, as well as experience, of right, an element in the transmuting of personality into a work of art?

Dr. Brinton sums up his view as follows: "The living presence of this emotional personality is the secret of the perennial attraction of the very greatest works of art; and the artist who deliberately rejects this will never touch that chord which makes the whole world kin, nor achieve his own best possible results." May the truth in this statement be admitted and yet made reconcilable with the recognition in Browning's poems of an emotional personality

livingly present but moulded and controlled to suit an artistic purpose, building "broad on the roots of things," or is it true that he "deliberately rejects" the emotional personality and "will never touch that chord," etc.?

Does a poet, on the other hand, who limits his work to the expression of a personal experience, also limit his appreciation to the understanding of a person who has had a similar experience, and so run a greater risk of limitation and growing out of date than a poet who broadens his work in line with larger and differentiated experience?

Is the merely subjective class of poetical work more permanent and powerful in its effects and fame than the dramatic and the epic?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— The Ideals of Love Implied in the Poems.

*Hints:* — Can you derive from this series of poems some definition of love, as you think the poet must have conceived of it in order to have written of love in all of them just as he has? Are they ever contradictory? and if they are consistent in a general way, in what does their unity, and in what do their differences consist?

The differences in the quality of the love in "The Laboratory" and in "Cristina and Monaldeschi" seem to be utterly opposed to the love poured forth regardless of slight or resentment in "A Serenade," "One Way of Love," "Mary Wollstonecraft and Fuseli," or "Cristina." Yet one is neither induced to blame the revengeful little lady who so gloats over the prospect of poisoning her magnificent rival, or to withhold a certain sympathy from the justice in the wronged Cristina's revenge upon her ungrateful lover, at the

same time that one appreciates the steadfast purity of the love of Pauline's lover, the utterly self-regardless strength of Mary Wollstonecraft's love, or the ecstatic victory in the persistency of the love of the lover of Cristina. If the reader be inclined to blame or to feel distaste for any of these different ways of loving it is rather to be attributed to his own prejudices than to any bias Browning shows.

How then can any predilection on the poet's part be perceived? Can it be assumed that his sympathy goes out to all sorts of genuine feeling, whether leading to commendable results and happy social relations or not? All such considerations, although not without an importance of their own, are apparently secondary, in any instance, to the supreme importance of the service of love to the lover through the revelation it affords him of his essential nature, any kind of real love being a possible initiation into a disciplinary spiritual process.

The differences to be noted, then, in the ideals of love in these poems, if this general theory is accepted, are those that belong actually to real life, to different characters under different circumstances, the underlying unity being the worth of all sorts of such emotions and experiences in the development of the individual soul. How will such an hypothesis suit throughout all these poems? Can you find any that fits these various poems better?

This one will account for the inclusion of such penetrating expositions of merely physical passion and triumphs of vengefulness as those of the fierce little French lady of "The Laboratory," and such extremely subtle spiritual yearnings for mastery over another and such triumphs of self-refrain as those of

the self-contained lover of "Mesmerism." The first ideal of love, in "The Laboratory," is in its own way as legitimately the outcome of a crude nature, driven by the goad of its own sensations, affected by circumstances and the environment of the time, and open to its special temptations, as the other, in "Mesmerism," is of a highly developed psychical nature aspiring ambitiously to work out its inmost potencies of spiritual yearning, and to assert over another an undue spiritual aggression; but instead of wreaking itself out selfishly as in the first case, it finds a new channel for its love and desire in a final impulsion towards that ardent respect for the spiritual rights of the loved one which is the highest fruit of love and desire on the psychical basis.

Why is it, do you suppose, that Browning has treated of jealousy so slightly, and of male jealousy not at all? For even Guido, in "The Ring and the Book," who pretends to be jealous, is not so. He acts in a way he could not if he really were so. Considering how the jealous husband is reiterated in Shakespeare, and in literature, generally, it would seem that Browning must have been conscious of his own abstention from this theme. Perhaps he avoided it because he desired to treat of love freshly and without imitation; perhaps he had the deeper reason that it was not a prominent feeling in his own experience — at any rate, in its extremest forms of vengefulness against either the rival or the one supposed to be fickle; — and so he had, instinctively and naturally, no desire to treat that which he could not so well render penetratingly. Perhaps violent jealousy is a sentiment that belongs more especially to marriage and to that institution as it was formerly regulated, or to relations



where there has been a sense of assured possession on which suspicion is afterward cast. However that may be, it is interesting to notice, in this group of poems (which excludes, for convenience, the illustrations of married life to be discussed later) that the emotions excited toward a rival are not intense or malevolent, save in "The Laboratory," and that the treatment of it there seems to take it for granted that such an emotion is a primitive one. In "Cristina and Monaldeschi," Cristina's jealousy is mixed with a nobler rage; in fact she is not represented as desirous to do any wrong against her rival, and although she might resent the rival's favor with Monaldeschi, she is not made to punish him for this merely, but is made to resent chiefly the indignity to herself wrought by his insincerity and untrustworthiness. Her own pain half rises from the consciousness of her own nobility, — the loyalty and generousness of heart which has been cheated of its deserts. More than all it rises from her power, as a queen, to take upon herself the liberty of pronouncing sentence and assuaging her sense both of degradation and injustice. This power of judging and punishing will, one may foresee, recoil upon her later, to harden her heart in a triumph of justice, if not to torture it with mercy.

Which of these two poems "The Laboratory" or "Cristina and Monaldeschi" is the more skilful portrayal of jealousy? And where does each fall in the evolutionary scale upon which Browning has built his different ideals of love? Can it be said that the lady of "The Laboratory" has an ideal of love? What should you say Cristina's was?

Two opposite ideals of love are designedly contrasted in "One Way of Love" and "Another Way



of Love.” The lover in the first poem sustains the pain of feeling that Pauline cares nothing for anything he can do to pleasure her, accepts the bitter conclusion that no charm can ever reside for her in his expression of his love for her, and yet, unrequited as his love is, he not only persists in it so far as he himself is concerned, but believes in the blessedness of such love, were it possible under happier conditions. The lover of “Another Way of Love,” on the other hand, tires of the very perfection of the love conferred upon him and even while it is still in the bud doubts whether it is not as indifferent as his own love is. The genuineness of emotion that the one believes in, the other not merely finds tiresome but rates low. The first lover’s ideal of love exalts the psychical element in it, so that he has something left for himself alone to hold to, even if his love be not requited. The other belittles love, and, seeing in it but a temporary amusement or passing gratification, he gets nothing but boredom even out of a love that is requited. The retort of the unappreciated beloved one, in commenting upon this standpoint, suggests, as the outpouring of Pauline’s does, that whether love is a gain or not depends rather upon what the lover himself thinks love to be, than upon what reward it offers him. The situation, she seems to say “is for you as you feel it. Out of the June weather and surfeit of sweetness go you must to such artificial shut-within-doors joys as you prefer, after all.” It is just the June season, as it were, of assured love which “tries a man’s temper” and shows his mettle. As for that love which he does not appreciate, the assured and not yet fully ripened love and beauty for which the lady stands, is there not a potency retained within that which is capable of devel-

oping in its own way ? Shall this not grow after its own fashion, according to its own nature, and either prepare for itself a due revenge, or make itself amends for the lack of appreciation accorded it. This sweetness and redness, of whose eternal sameness the lover complains, may thus, without changing, indeed, in a sense, yet effect a certain change in the relations of the pair which will give the more active love the advantage. So it may be said, that in this way June may grow new roses to repair the beauty of the bower this lover has defaced ; and doing this, whatever effort it may cost her, and in spite of him, this richer love of the lady will have accomplished something well worth while. And if, following thus the law of her own life toward the ideal her love sees, her love shall grow on to a delicious perfection of fullness and ripeness, she may then be in a position to consider whether she shall choose one who will be equal to appreciating such a love and adequate to give hers a really reciprocal devotion in return, or whether, acting upon the bitter experience she has had, she will learn how to repel any approach, and using her own natural weapons with added skill and an artfulness whose capability this knowledge of him has developed, punish and stop any further such deprecations.

Does your interpretation of this poem agree with this one ? What does the poet mean by " June " — the lady or the lady's love, or the opportunity open for an ideal love-relation or love-influence ? And what is meant by " June-lightning " ? " A woman never sacrifices herself but once," says Mrs. Linden in Ibsen's " Doll's House." Having learned once by such bitter experience as the lady of " Another Way of

Love" gains or anticipates from a love already giving sign of breaking down, she learns how to be more wary the next time, and becomes herself an active foreseeing agent in love, either for good or for evil. So, acting on her experience of "man and of spider" she may use such sudden passion storms as are incident to the season of love, as to the season of June, in order to clear scores with this nonchalant lover and stop any fresh devastation with blasting spirit lightning. In love's fruition, in the blossom "June wears on her bosom, lie such revenges and such vengeance for slights or scorn of a love once indulged in, as that which Alphonse Daudet warned his sons against when he wrote "Sapho" for them.

How would you sum up the outcome of these two little poems, "One Way of Love" and "Another Way of Love"? The one poem represents a psychical and the other a physical effect of love upon the men lovers. How is it as to the women? The lover who desires the more is, in the second poem, the woman. Pauline we know of merely as the loved one, and of her point of view we know only from the speaker that she does not love him; but of the standpoint of the lady of "Another Way of Love" we know even more than we do of the lover of Pauline. In her conscious weighing of the situation and the possibilities of this love relation for her, and her action in consequence, whether the love may be shaped to this or that spiritual result, — in all this there is a tendency toward an impersonal expression of what love may be made to yield which makes her one of the most interesting examples of Browning's exalted types of ill-requited lovers. She uses her special experience to weigh the worth of love. "In a Year,"

also, in showing the attitude toward love of an ill-requited woman lover, may be instanced as belonging to the same class as "Cristina," since its final stanza leads to the similar conclusion that unsuccessful love is a doorway to spiritual perception of the Infinite beyond the Human.

Mr. Nettleship, however, in the chapter in his volume on Browning's Poems on Love, cites "Another Way of Love" among the poems showing the effect of successful love upon man, but ignores it as showing the effect of ill-requited love upon a woman. Speaking of poems which relate to the effect upon the woman of her love being despised, he says this situation "is only twice delineated," namely in "The Laboratory" and "In a Year," and he goes on to say that "in the poems which relate to the woman's feelings we notice principally (where her love is returned) an absorption of her spirit into that of the man, a blind clinging to some idea of God as formed through education and association merely, and an absolute want of originality and of power to look at the passion of love in an abstract sense outside the woman herself and her lover."

Is this reference to "In a Year," as evidence of "a blind clinging to some idea of God," etc., quite just to the conclusion of that poem? How completely is this statement justified by the woman's power in "Another Way of Love," to look at love in the abstract?

It is desirable to inquire, also, if so sweeping a conclusion is to be made as to the characteristics of all Browning's women lovers, whether other poems or plays, although not included in this programme, confirm Mr. Nettleship. One play alone, published more

than ten years before "Another Way of Love" and most of the love-lyrics here considered, "The Return of the Druses," supplies a good contrary argument in the figure of Anael. Her character, in respect especially to her sensitive testing of the quality of her own and Djabal's love, is made the turning-point of the action. Again the capacity for withholding her own predilections and testing the love of two men, which is shown by Eulalia in "A Soul's Tragedy" (1848), opens Mr. Nettleship's conclusion to further question, when he says that "In none [of the love poems] which relate to the women do we observe the width of view and intellectual power which are attributed to the male lover."

Is Miss Scudder's opposite view better justified than Mr. Nettleship's or not when she says: "Love is indeed to all these women supreme; but that love has a broader outlook than the personal and limited horizon of their relations to their lovers. Intense and passionate as this may be, there is in Browning no noble woman who does not look beyond, and see in the love whereby her own life is ruled, only the type and symbol of the broader bond which unites the world. The intuitive perception of abstract right, of the workings of the moral law, is the innate quality of all Browning's women. Bitter is the suffering when the personal love clashes with the universal righteousness. . . . Love, narrow and individual in its first and most common manifestation, broadens in noble natures into the deeper desire for service; with all true souls it rises at last into the link between the human and the Divine. . . . Thus inevitably and in simple consistency Browning gives his supreme reverence to women. Because of their moral pre-eminence he attributes to

them a special office in life, "at once to inspire and to serve." (See "Womanhood in Modern Poetry," *Poet-lore*, Vol. I., pp. 449-465, October, 1889.)

Is there more variety of nature and a wider range of development indicated for the women than for the men in these poems? Note the cruder passion of the woman in "The Laboratory," compared with the cool power of judging the value of love shown by the woman in "The Glove," and in "Another Way of Love," and, again, the spiritually refined and utterly devoted love of Mary Wollstonecraft and the heroine of "In a Year." Is there as wide a range of difference between Porphyria's lover and Cristina's?

Is there a tendency, in showing the effects of love on men in these poems, to create types whose love is so eminently a psychical force and so independent of rejection or misfortune that they are unusual elsewhere in English literature and distinctive of Browning? The evidence supplied by an outline study of the rejected lover as he or she appears in old ballads and novels suggests that it was considered ridiculous and weak for a man to persist in loving despite bad treatment or without return, while for a woman it was pathetic and fine. Compare the love of Chaucer's patient Griselda, and the Nut-brown Maid of that ballad, with Romeo's love for Rosalind, Juliet's predecessor, in Shakespeare, and in Brooke's "Palace of Pleasure," the story Shakespeare followed.

"There was little room in the position of woman in knightly society for a recognition of any other than a physical interest in love and a physical end, until, through higher ideals of the demands of the individual soul there had been developed a higher plane of life. The speakers in Browning's 'One Way of Love,'



‘The Last Ride Together,’ and ‘Cristina,’ above all Valence in ‘Colombe’s Birthday,’ represent a modern ideal of the psychical worth of passion,—an ideal developed from the feudal notions of love through greatly changed social conditions.” (See remarks on this subject in *Poet-love*, Vol. II., pp. 37–38, January, 1890.)

On the other hand, in the more sophisticated social life of Southern Europe at the earliest dawn of the Renaissance period, ideals of romantic love were held by the choicer spirits among the Neoplatonists, and notably by Dante, which bear an affinity to those expressed by Browning’s exalted lovers. From the conception of love given to the world by Plato the finer side of the romantic love of early chivalry grew, in the Middle Ages, through the admixture of a new idea of the worth both of woman and the spiritual in humanity. This fresh admixture was due in part to Christianity and the influence upon civilization of the Northern races and their more normal habits of life; and, through this admixture, romantic love seems to have been brought, as Mr. Cooke says, “to its highest expression in Dante and Petrarch, and revived in a modernized form by Browning.” Plato “imaginatively proves that love is the great mediator, the eternal reconciler, between severed human souls . . . yearned for with the soul’s utmost intensity, because it is an anticipation, albeit indistinct, of an ideal union. . . . With the later poets, especially of the Anthology, we come upon some lyric . . . so unlike all that has gone before in the Greek conception of woman, and the love between the sexes, that we cannot but see it is a new thing. . . . It came to its perfection in the troubadours, in chivalry, and in Dante . . . The mediæval



interpreters of romantic love turned to Plato as the great teacher of its doctrines and spirit; but they made the recipient of the love the source of inspiration rather than the lover himself, as with Plato. . . . Dante said that Beatrice had revealed to him all virtue and all wisdom. Petrarch blessed the happy moment which directed his heart to Laura, for she led him to the path of virtue." (See "Browning's Interpretation of Romantic Love, as compared with that of Plato, Dante, and Petrarch," *Poet-love*, Vol. VI., pp. 225-238.)

In speaking of Plato's idea of love, although pointing out that it was the love of man for man rather than the love of man and woman which concerned him, Mr. Cooke refers to the parable in "the Symposium" (see Jowett's "Plato's Dialogues," Vol. I., pp. 483-486), relating how man was originally created in the shape of a ball with four hands and feet and two faces, and later was split in half to make the two sexes, — hence love being the desire of man for unity and the whole; but this story, it should be remembered, is told in character by Aristophanes, and the sexual point of view it involves is opposed by Socrates, whose teaching may be abridged as follows for comparison with Dante and Browning: —

Diotima, say Socrates, taught him that "love may be described generally as the love of the everlasting possession of the good" or the love of and birth in beauty. "All men are bringing to the birth in their bodies and in their souls," because, "to the mortal, birth is a sort of eternity and immortality . . . and all men will necessarily desire immortality together with good, if love is of the everlasting possession of the good." She explained to him, further, how the mortal body partakes of immortality by "undergoing a perpetual

process of loss and reparation," the "old worn-out mortality leaving another new and similar one behind," but the "immortal partakes of immortality in another way. . . . Creative souls — for there are men who are more creative in their souls than in their bodies — conceive that which is proper for the soul to conceive." (See Jowett's "Dialogues of Plato: The Symposium," Vol. I., passages quoted, pp. 498-501.) Again in the "Phædrus" (Vol. I., pp. 557, 558, 570), love is described by Socrates as a madness or ecstasy, but of two kinds, one produced by "human infirmity, the other by a divine release from the ordinary ways of men," and this sort of ecstasy belongs to the immortal soul which is self-moving, never failing of self or of motion, self-motion being "the very idea and essence of the soul. . . . The body which is moved from without is soulless; but that which is moved from within has a soul . . . without beginning and immortal." In this highest madness of the soul, the sight of the beauty of earth is a transport of recollection of true beauty, beheld in another world. Whoever feels it "would like to fly away, but cannot." He is "like a bird fluttering and looking upward and careless of the world below," the object of his affections being chosen according to the desire of his soul for a soul that has had a like nature and revered the same god, to whom their recollection clings, of whom "they become possessed," and "receive his character and ways as far as man can participate in God."

The lover of "Cristina" holds a like resistless faith in a remembered twinship of soul with the beloved one; and the lover of "Evelyn Hope" seeks satisfaction in a similar mystical realm of spiritual being.

"Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli," is an expression of the outgrowth from platonic love toward that warmer, thoroughly romantic, and yet exaltedly devoted love which belongs peculiarly to the chivalric vein of the troubadour lover ; and others of Browning's romantic poems exemplify, with historic fidelity, this especial phase of romantic love. (See Helen Leah Reed's "Browning's Pictures of Chivalry," *Poet-lore*, Vol. XI., pp. 588-601.)

Summing up the ground passed over, together with the few poems of this series still remaining to be surveyed, it may be noticed that the whole has naturally arranged itself in three general groups: the first, covering the poems already named and discussed, which express the effect of a personal experience, whether happy or not, upon the lover. The second group expresses the lover's judgment of an experience, less recent, his thought lingering reflectively over it and weighing its value not merely to himself, or to his soul, or to the beloved one, as in the first group, but in relation to outside considerations. "A Light Woman," "Dîs Aliter Visum," "Confessions," "Youth and Art," "Bifurcation," "Rosny," deal thus with the relation of a love-experience to the moral or conventional opinions of the outside world. The third group — embracing "A Pretty Woman," "Nympholeptos," "Solomon and Balkis," "Adam, Lilith, and Eve," "Which?" — expresses in a more abstract way, as if in a parable embodying a veiled but intended meaning, some comment on love in general, or on typical love relations between men and women.

In "A Light Woman" the speaker has ventured to interfere in the relations of his friend with an objectionable woman from whom it seemed desirable to

rescue him, and the meddler's success only leads him to bitter reflections on his own presumption and the fact that he himself is the least to be commended of the three. Is the ideal of love to be drawn from this poem that love belongs essentially to the two souls concerned and should not be subject to the offhand condemnation and interference of those outside the relationship? And observe whether such a conception agrees with the ideals implied as to the opinions of the outer world in the other poems of this second group. In "Dis Aliter Visum" and "Youth and Art" the worthlessness of external views of the socially fit way to act in life are arraigned by the two speakers as leading to less good moral results than the indulgence of love despite social unfitness. The argument against suppression of the impulse to love seems to be that there is a vitality about obedience to a genuine emotion of love compared with which conventional inconvenience is not only petty but nullifying, since the nature schools itself in deference to such cautions only to grow insincere and fall a prey to degenerate relations which are destructive of spiritual impetus, not only for the characters of the two first concerned but for those with whom these become involved. In "Bifurcation" a similar question is posed between love and a course thought good socially, and this question is left open. The intimation with which it closes is, says Dr. Brinton (see "Browning on Unconventional Relations," *Poet-lore*, Vol. IV., May, 1892, pp. 266-271), "that self-denial may be a greater sin than self-indulgence." In "Confessions" a dying man maintains the joy and sweetness of an old love episode against the ascetic notion of it as a dangerous and doubtful inclination of the flesh. Finally, in "Rosny,"

the desire to gratify public opinion with the fame of a warrior-hero leads love to sacrifice his life to it.

So in all the poems of this group there is an antithesis between love and social opinion, and all tend toward the conclusion that love is closer to spirituality, and is to the individuals concerned in each case, therefore, a better guide than the external opinions of the social world.

In tracing the ideals of love embodied in these poems through the last group, ask whether, in these most critical and quizzical of Browning's love poems, there is any disagreement with the foregoing group. In "A Pretty Woman" the conclusion expressed is even so far respectful of the individual nature and the right to follow its own bent that its incapacity to love deeply, although accompanied by an exasperating facility to attract love, is acknowledged, and neither irritation nor forcible possession is justified, but rather such mere appreciation as that shown a rose one admires but leaves to itself unplucked and unsullied. "Numpholeptos" expresses the devotion of the male lover to the woman he has made an idol of. He bends himself to the performance of the superhuman demands this unreal woman-shape lays upon him. And the slavishness of the man to the hopeless and stultifying action which she is incapable of entering into or really rewarding is the legitimate result, the poem suggests, of this sort of fetichism in the relations of men and women. It is ignorance of actual life which makes her exacting, and it is his worship which makes her artificially queen it over him as his moral superior. The ideal of love, insinuated symbolically, through the unsatisfactoriness of the relationship between this lover and his task-mistress, which the poem satirically exposes, is probably that, in place of this

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sort of fantastic, sentimental, unbalanced ensnarement of the man by the woman, a more perfectly reciprocal and healthy relationship may grow up between them when they have become equally independent and self-poised by actual contact with the real problems of life and hard-won triumphs over them. (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IX., Notes, p. 301, for Browning's explanation of his meaning; also, passage on "Numphroleptos" in "The Ideals of Womanhood held by Browning," *Poet-lore*, Vol. IX., No. 3, p. 399.) Mrs. Glazebrook (see "Browning Studies," pp. 195-203) writes of the allegory of the nymph in this poem as suggesting three alternatives: "She may be just some one individual woman, and the poem a simple love story told in allegorical form. . . . But the whole tone, style, and effect of the poem seem to me to forbid this narrow interpretation. . . . Browning tells stories of this kind simply, dramatically, circumstantially. . . . Secondly, the nymph may be the personification of Philosophy. And this I believe her to be in part. But I think she is more. There must be some good reason for that outburst at the end, which makes so much of her being a woman — of her 'She-intelligence,' etc. . . . And so I am brought to the third alternative, which is the one I hold. The nymph is the ideal woman — a modern Beatrice or Laura," dwelling "in a carefully guarded abode of peace and virtue," sending forth the man to make his way in life's careers, always exacting victory for him in these, "but not the stains and scars of the victor." These her untried experience of life does not permit her to understand. So also "Solomon and Balkis" satirizes the male vanity and the feminine love of allurements under which sensuality may mask as love.



“Adam, Lilith, and Eve” exemplifies the typical man in a similar mutually self-fooling relationship with the two typical classes of women, Lilith, the proud but loyal-hearted Brunhild type, Eve, the softer but wilier Gudrun type. (See Mrs. Corson’s Note, however, *Poet-love*, Vol. VIII., pp. 278–280, for an interpretation diametrically opposite to this and to the one given in the digest of this poem, *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, Vol. XI., p. 327.) Finally, “Which?” in presenting dramatically the ideals of love held by three different women seems to sum up this topic of Ideals of Love, by indicating that the most essential requirement in a lover is that his love shall have reference to one alone.

*Queries for Discussion.* — To what extent are Browning’s love-poems dramatic, and to what extent does there exist an agreement among them which enables one to judge what ideals of love guided him?

Is Mr. Stedman justified in speaking of Browning’s love lyrics as “attesting the boundless liberty and sovereignty of love,” so that their “moral is that . . . the greatest sin does not consist in giving rein to our desires, but in stinting or too prudently repressing them”? (See “Victorian Poets,” pp. 322, 329.) If there is truth in this, what limitation of its application, generally, should be made on the score of the poet’s satire in his more quizzical poems of spurious love-relations and of his exemplifications throughout his work of developed love as essentially spiritual?

Is it an advance, morally and socially, that the men lovers should be shown to be capable of such disinterested love as it was formerly supposed only women were likely to express?



What elements of the love celebrated, typically, by Plato and Dante belong to Browning's most exalted lovers, and wherein has he added a strain of his own? Is his conception of the value of love to the soul of the lover more in accord, on the whole, with Dante's reverence for woman, or with Plato's lonely regard for the spiritual and individual element of love which the Greek philosophy identified with the lover instead of with the beloved one?

Is the ideal of love held by Browning's exalted lovers as social in its aim as Mr. Nettleship supposes when he writes as follows:—

“Should we consider the conclusions of Browning's male lovers as one whole, what use can we make of them, when thus blended? If we believe with Cristina's lover, that we are here in this life, as distinguished from all other lives before and after, for the purpose of loving somebody; with Evelyn Hope's lover, that, having fulfilled that condition here, we shall surely enjoy it to the full in some future state; and with the lover in ‘The Last Ride,’ that it is possible that love enjoyed may be, not only one fulfilment of a future state, but that fruition which is more glorious and all-satisfying than any other, we do but intensify powers of which we are assuredly possessed, and by the very nature of our hopes for their exercise, elevate and purify our desires. Finding ourselves possessed of certain instincts, whose development is the passion of love, and which claim exercise in one way or another; . . . finding that not only as reproductive agents are these instincts in themselves of incalculable importance, but, moreover, that in their exercise for that purpose they expand our sympathetic powers, and nourish and extend the power of action of our other

attributes ; we do but take another step, to learn first that perhaps the passion is but a symbol of the infinite yearning of a first cause, a type of that boundless love which, wedded to boundless power, has been imagined as the all-ruling Deity ; and then that this very passion, infinitely extended, may be the means of our helping untold millions as God's vice-gerents in other existences. . . . If we believe that no love which has honestly sprung up in any man's breast can go unrewarded altogether, lest thereby so much power be lost in the machine of the universe ; if we thus dare to weld together the thoughts expressed in these three poems, . . . who shall say whether the little germ of one man's love truly begun, for one woman, may not in some far-away life arise, an infinite passion, by whose glowing impulse the two shall mount upwards ? And if for many lives he and she toil on, failing, learning, and accumulating force . . . surely at last, when . . . division and duality are things of forgotten ages, the perfect human entity, taking throne at the foot of God, will wield the sceptre of power, instinct with the spirit of love, over the millions who are still toiling and climbing, and in the end the whole world will blend in the inconceivable splendor of a star that blazes through an ever present eternity ! ”

How does this way of regarding love accord with Browning's ? Should you say that these poems placed emphasis on the spiritual side of love, regarding it as essentially emotional and transcendent ? And is this view too much influenced by the idea of reproduction and too biassed by notions of institutional, even monarchical, forms of government to be perfectly in harmony with the poet ? Does love as Browning conceives of it fulfil itself through personality, in order

ultimately to establish the highest consciousness of the individual soul, and therefore, instead of blending all souls into likeness and unity, merely, as Mr. Nettleship supposes, does it, rather, branch into complexity and differentiation, in order to realize new power and make new sympathies possible ?

Is it likelier that greater injustice will be done the poet by defining his ideal of love and giving it a prescribed goal, than by regarding his love poems as an artist's attempts to embody human ideals of an evolutionary sort having a relative rather than an absolute value, and expressing a general tendency rather than a specific aim ? Might his position toward his own poems be that of one who held that although an absolute ideal of perfect love would be desirable for man to aspire toward, yet that it would be undesirable for any one man to limit it for others or himself, no one nature's experience and aspiration absorbing all the possibilities, and each such experience and aspiration being but a relative manifestation or partial mirroring of the imagined Infinite — " Infinite Passion and the pain of finite hearts that yearn " ?

Is romantic love to Browning a renunciation or a realization of personality ? Is self-sacrifice or self-satisfaction, soul-development or social progress its master impulse ? But are such ends as these opposed or supplementary ? Does self-sacrifice lead to soul development ; or does it cramp the active energies of the spiritual nature and induce a passivity unfriendly to progress ? Does self-satisfaction, on the other hand, — the wreaking of oneself on one's desires, — tend to satiate and, in a sense, debauch the energy, giving it the restlessness of over-activity ? If in either way danger lies, where may the remedy be found ?

Is the solution a middle-way or a reference of the question as to conduct, in each case, to the dictates of the individual soul in relation to its special environment? Does soul development depend upon social progress the more, or social progress create the better conditions for soul development?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Poetic Workmanship.

*Hints* : — It is interesting to notice that the four-stressed measure predominates in this series of poems. At least twenty-two of the thirty-nine poems are written in this way, and perhaps one other poem, "Cristina," should be added to the number, for it is ordinarily so scanned. Whether metrical facility or poverty of ability as a metricist is betokened by the evidence that this four-stressed measure is so often used, may be in part determined by a study of the differentiation the poet has made in this kind of line in these poems, and of how he has manipulated it to meet the dramatic or emotional effects attained.

"Garden Fancies" is half taken up with description of a past scene in a garden, and yet it is all the time more directly presentative of the describer. While he talks we see that he is pushing open the wicket gate, and passing successively past the shrub, the box along one side of the gravel walk, the phlox, the roses in a row, the flower with the Spanish name, — all of them recalling to him incidents of the past scene when he walked through the garden with the lady who then made all these incidents enchanting and who now, as he catches sight of her, farther on, makes him hurry off toward her, flinging back, as he goes, after the expressive lines 41 and 42, cautions to the flower and taunts to the roses expressive of this lady's superior

charm. The state of emotional sensibility belonging to this lover comes out in the metaphors. Human feeling is attributed to the hinges, which wince and murmur, the buds "pout" and "flout" and "turn up their faces"; and notice how "sunshine," "sound," "speech," "song," and "beauties" are spoken of as capable of human action, of lingering, sleeping, waking, and fleeing. Referring to line 20 in the "Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett," Elizabeth Barrett speaks of "that beautiful and musical use of the word 'meandering' which I never remember having seen used in relation to sound before." The general tone of the poem is one of smooth grace and delicate sentiment. Observe how the metrical form is related to this effect. Although the four-stressed line opens with an accented syllable for the first four lines, and, similarly, at the beginning of other stanzas, especially v. and vi., where there is an outburst of impulsive rapture, the lines, as a rule, open with unaccented syllables, and often, as in lines 7 and 8, for example, — "the poor snail," "and forget it the leaves," — an extra unstressed syllable lengthens the iambic foot.

In "The Laboratory," the four-stressed line is often begun with a stressed syllable followed by one, and sometimes two, unstressed, the whole giving an entirely opposite effect to that of "The Flower's Name," an effect of abrupt excitability rather than smooth sensibility, of fierceness instead of sentiment. The way the metre serves the emotion it expresses, so that the right rhetorical emphasis is in general agreement with the rhythm, has been noticed particularly by Mr. William Allingham. He points the second stanza for reading, thus: —

"He is with *her*, and they *know* that *I* know  
 Where they *are*, what they *do*: they believe *my* *tears* flow  
 While they *laugh*, laugh at *me*, at me fled to the drear  
 Empty *church*, to pray God in for *them*! I am *here*."

This calls attention to the strong antitheses made between the pronouns, the tears, the laughter, the church where the lovers think the lady is, the laboratory where she really is. Notice, also, the alternation of stressed and unstressed or less stressed syllables as here marked. How far does the sense-emphasis coincide with the metrical stress? Scan the other stanzas, marking the metrical accents in the same way, and inquire whether the lines of this poem are more often opened with a stressed or weak syllable, and if the different effect of the poem as a whole is due to the rhythm being essentially opposite to that of the preceding poem, if it is made up chiefly, that is, of what are called trochaic and dactylic feet (feet of two and three syllables opening with an accented and followed by unaccented syllables); or whether it is made up chiefly of what are called iambic and anapæstic feet (feet of two and three syllables opening with light and followed by stressed syllables), and if the different effect of the whole is due, therefore, simply to the fact that there are in this poem a greater number of lines than in the preceding, which open with a stress. In the case of such lines as 9 it might be held that, although it begins with a strong syllable followed by two weak ones, this foot is not a dactyl, but, as frequently in iambic verse, that the usual opening weak syllable is dropped, and that after "Grind ā," a new and reg-



ular iambic foot, "way moist," follows, the rest of the line being made up of two anapæsts.

For the sake of unifying the metre throughout would it be better to scan such lines thus, or to account them as exceptional? Or is Mr. Arthur Beatty right in classing the poem as trochaic and dactylic? In his valuable little pamphlet on "Browning's Verse Form," he instances it as an example of the trochaic logæædic, meaning by this that it is written in the free metre, called logæædic by the Greek prosodists, in which extra syllables were added at will to the foot, dactyls being blent with trochees in the variety called trochaic, and anapæsts with iambs in that called iambic, in a way "combining the unfettered movement of the noblest prose with the true poetic cadence."

The rhyme scheme is simple, the stanza being made up of two couplets. Are the double rhymes effective? Notice the power of speech attributed to the drop of poison (line 31). Is it appropriate that the metaphors should be rare? Had the lady an eye for color? What examples of effective alliteration does the poem afford?

"The Confessional" is the simplest of poems as to metaphor and diction, and most regular as to the rhythm, which is markedly that of a steadily iambic four-stressed line. Are there any elisions of the weak syllables of the foot at the beginning of the lines? What is the rhyme scheme? Are there any double rhymes, such as the "tightly" "whitely," "smithy" "prithy," of "The Laboratory"? What similes are there, and how do these and the bare style suit the speaker?

The verse in "Cristina" may be classed either as four or eight stressed. Each pair of lines, as printed



in the apparently eight-line stanza, really constitutes but one poetic line or verse, each stanza being composed of two couplets ending in double rhymes throughout the poem. It may be questioned whether it might not be better often to scan each line as having three stresses, for example:—

“ There are flashes struck from midnights  
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,” etc.

instead of

“ There are flashes struck from midnights,  
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,” etc.

The second mode seems too regular to express the impatient half-injured scornfulness of mood natural to the speaker, who, according to the first mode, would fling headlong past his opening words towards his words of main emphasis. But read the stanzas in the two ways, in the first, letting the voice pass lightly on to “ flashes ” and “ fire ” and there marking the stress; in the second, emphasizing the first and then every alternate syllable; and judge for yourself. This first mode would make each line open with a three-syllabled foot of two weak, followed by a strong syllable, that is, with an anapæst, the remainder of the line being a two-syllabled foot, that is, iambic, and the verse, as a whole, a good example of the iambic logacædic metre.

The regular iambic rhythm of the four-stressed verse of “ The Lost Mistress,” the simple alternate rhymed quatrain and quiet diction fit the dismissed lover’s gray mood. What he is saying of the eaves and vine-buds intimates that he is standing in the doorway bidding good-bye. What pertinence is there in

his saying that "the red turns gray"? Does this strike him as sadly like his own budding hope?

Is "Evelyn Hope" an unquestionable example of dactylic and trochaic metre? Here, as in the other poems, the lines stressed at the opening are expressive of an agitated emotional outburst, and the lines opening with weak syllables signify the relief of a quieter mood. The last stanza, for example, in effect very serenely solemn, is characterized by an iambic rhythm throughout. Notice the rhyme and stanza scheme. Are there any double rhymes? Observe the nature of the similes and allusions.

Summarize the differences between the remaining poems of four-stressed lines as to variety of rhythm, and new kinds of stanza and rhymes, for example, "Two in the Campagna," closes its stanza of five lines with a shorter line of three stresses which rhymes with the first and third. "Another Way of Love," while each stanza closes with triplet verses having four stresses, has eight lines preceding with four rhymes elaborately interlinked. "A Pretty Woman" has a double rhymed couplet of two stressed lines between its double and sometimes triple rhyming first and fourth lines. "In a Year" has in its eight-lined stanza but two lines, which are four-stressed; the others have two stresses, except the first, which has three. The songs of "In a Gondola" frequently have short lines of two stresses amid the normal four-stressed verse of this poem, and at its close there is a transition for the last seventeen lines to five stresses in the line, marking noticeably the change of mood with the change of metrical movement, as the lovers return, disembark, and the man is surprised and stabbed. Each quatrain of "A Light Woman" closes with a three-stressed

line which knits up the stanza ; and " Confessions " is similarly constructed, so far as its quatrains, in iambic metre closing with a three-stressed line, are concerned, yet it seems to secure its more humorous and crisp effect not merely by the character and similes of the story, which should be observed, but also by there being fewer syllables, generally, to the line. One of the main traits distinguishing " The Last Ride Together " from the many other poems having a four-stressed iambic line is the carefully interlocked rhyme of the eleven-lined stanza. It serves to add an element of rhythm closely corresponding to the movement of thought and emotion as well as a suggestion of horseback-riding. Compare with other poems of Browning's in which horseback-riding is in the rhythmic background : " The Ride from Ghent," " Thro' the Metidja," " Boot, Saddle, to Horse and Away." " It is not possible to be thinking mainly of one's horse, what he is doing, how he is going when it is ' Our Last Ride Together,' mine and hers ! " comments Mr. Bulkeley (see " The Reasonable Rhythm of some of Browning's Poems," London Browning Society Papers). " Though our hearts must throb with our horses' motion, and our thoughts fall into their rhythmic rise and fall, yet the deeper feelings reign here, of love, regret, hope, and it is not always consciously, though ever there, that the horses canter under us ; and yet, since thus we are together, would we than this animal cadence wish for a better heaven ? " Notice that the stanza is made up of two sets of paired couplets, the second set having an additional line repeating its second rhyme, both sets being woven into one piece by the fifth and the last lines rhyming. How do the diction, allusions, and metaphors correspond with the nature of

this lover and reveal his culture and character in comparison, for instance, with those of "Porphyria's Lover;" and what special qualities of its own has the four-stressed line of that poem? Is the four-stressed verse of "Too Late" given an effect quite different from all the preceding poems, and how? Notice the rough yet vivid metaphors (see lines 21-24, 31-36, 43-48, 75 and 76, 100-102, 110-112, and so on) and what they intimate of the kind of man this lover was. "Cristina and Monaldeschi," "Dis Aliter Visum," "Mary Wollstonecraft," "Adam, Lilith, and Eve," "Which?" and "Rosny," the remaining poems of four-stressed lines, have various interesting points of differentiation: either in the preponderance of lines with the stress at the opening syllable, as in the first and last poems, in both cases suiting the tragic intensity; or in the preponderance of lines opening with a weak syllable, as in the other poems; or in the lengthening of the foot, and shortening of some of the lines to three-stressed lines, as in "Adam, Lilith, and Eve;" in adding a two-stressed refrain, as in "Rosny;" or else in the varied rhyme and stanza structure; and in the use of double rhymes.

Of the remainder of this series of love poems, aside from those discussed in the following programme, notice that "A Woman's Last Word," "Love among the Ruins," "A Lover's Quarrel," "Mesmerism," "The Glove," "Youth and Art," "A Likeness," may be grouped together on the basis of all having a three-stressed line. "Solomon and Balkis" is marked by a six-stressed line.

Concerning the congruity existing between the metre and the matter of "A Woman's Last Word," Dr. Brinton writes (see "The New Poetic Form as shown

in Browning," Vol. II., pp. 234-246, May, 1890): "In the short lines . . . we seem to feel the broken, hysterical sobbing of a woman. The primary rhythm is reinforced by the unusual combination of rhyme and repetition, — 'more, Love,' 'before, Love,' etc., while the secondary rhythm is carried on by an adroit disposition of consonantal tone-colors, contrasted at what we may call the close of each sob, — that is, carried through, but not beyond the shorter line. The whole poem is a model effort to bring poetic form into rhythmical co-ordination with the natural physical expression of the emotion it describes." And he calls attention to "the difference in treatment of a quite contrasted mental state, as shown in that exquisite composition 'Love among the Ruins.' The emotion is that of a confident lover walking leisurely at eve to a trysting spot among the ruins where his girl awaits him. Precisely the same measure is used for the shorter verse; but, by a lengthening of the alternate line, and a different adjustment of the secondary rhythm, the whole effect is not merely altered but inverted. Instead of being a reflection of the rhythm of broken sobs, it is that of long and calm inspirations with alternate rests."

An interesting variation from the agile double rhymes that characterize "The Glove," should not be overlooked. When the lady speaks to Ronsard so earnestly, these change into single rhymes, recurring afterwards to their normal dexterity. Elizabeth Barrett wrote Browning, in the "Letters": "What a noble lion you give us, too, with the 'flash on his forehead' and 'leagues in the desert already' as we look . . . and with what a 'curious felicity' you turn the subject 'glove' to another use and strike De Lorge's blow

back on him with it, in the last paragraph of your story ! And the versification ! And the lady's speech — so calm and proud — yet a little bitter."

"Mesmerism" should not be passed over without noticing especially the suspension of the sense and rhythm through stanza after stanza, and how this brings out the steady willing of the speaker. Where do the dashes stop at the ends of the stanzas, and how does the alternation of suspension and pause fit the relief and the strain ?

The five-stressed line offers the common ground for classing together "Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli," "Bifurcation," "Numpholeptos," and "Inapprehensiveness." Each of these smaller groups may be passed in review in the same way as the larger group of poems with a four-stressed line, directing observation to the following points : (1) the preponderance of lines opening with an accented or an unaccented syllable ; (2) the preponderant number of syllables to each foot ; (3) the dramatic or musical effect of elisions of weak syllables, or of the shift from strong to weak ; (4) the rhyme and stanza plan ; (5) the nature of the metaphors and allusions and their fitness ; (6) whether the poem in part or as a whole is symbolic.

"Numpholeptos" illustrates what is meant by this sixth point. A symbolical suggestion pervades the poem that the nymph is an ideal woman who is the idol of man instead of a human reality. The imagery is the poetic means by which this is implied. This imagery of a central light with colored light rays is an inverse application of Dante's supernal light that guides him heavenward, in the centre of which the poet of chivalric love placed Beatrice, the "lady round whom splendors meet in homage." (See "Vita



Nuova," xliii. ; "Purgatorio," xxix., 77 foll. ; "Paradiso," xxx.). Browning de-theologizes this metaphor. He makes it human by insinuating the effect it might have on man to be led here in his life on earth by such a guardian queen outward from the centre of such light, instead of inward toward it in the pursuit of angelic perfection in heaven. Dr. Berdoe, however, in "Browning's Science in 'Numpholeptos'" (*Poet-lore*, Vol. II., pp. 617-624, Dec. 1890), after referring to Dante's imagery, cites Browning's "use of the figure drawn from the constitution of white light" in "The Ring and the Book," i. 1354, "Sordello," v. 605, and "Fifine," 897, to show that Browning was in love with this light metaphor, and in "Numpholeptos" built up a complete poem on this scientific foundation.

*Queries for Discussion.*—Are Browning's free rhythm and often unadorned diction to be considered as appropriate dramatically or deficient poetically ?

Are his lines and metres that are frequently stressed at the beginning to be censured when not in accord with his normal line and metre, or are they to be taken as meant to serve the purpose either of varying and enriching the harmony of the verse or of indicating a change of feeling ?

Do the double rhymes in these poems betoken either a certain fluency or playfulness of mood ; and does the poet indulge in them when they are dramatically inappropriate to the speaker or do not suit the effect ?

Is the scientific or the literary symbolism of the light image in "Numpholeptos" most in keeping with the meaning of the poem ?

Which is more frequent in these poems, metaphor, simile, allegory, or symbolism ?



## A GROUP OF LOVE LYRICS

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I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— The Story and Mood.

*Hints:—*For the story see notes to *Camberwell Browning* as given above. Observe how many of the poems may be said to have stories, or at least to imply a situation, and how many of them are simply the expression of the lover's moods. In the first two lyrics from "Pippa Passes" the lovers long for the love of the lady of their affection. The page, however, feels how hopeless it is that his lady should ever have any need of him, while in the other one there is the feeling of certainty that the seed of love has been sown and must reach its fruition some time, and that not even death can prevent it. In "Song" the love is so intense that the lover can find no adequate words of praise, himself, but would have others gaze upon his lady and express their admiration in praise, while he keeps silent. In "My Star," the feeling is somewhat of a contrast to that in "Song." Here is a lover who instead of desiring all others to praise his beloved, is happy because he alone can appreciate her, because to him only has she revealed her beauty of soul. This makes her peculiarly his and others are welcome to praise those more brilliant who make a universal impression. Which do you consider represents the deeper of these two phases of feeling?

In "Misconceptions" there is reflected the mood of a lover who has been regarded merely as a stepping stone to a true and abiding love, and has thus been left by his mistress to pine for a good which was not his. He does not rail at the perfidy of the inconstant fair, but seems magnanimously to consider that he had mistaken her graciousness toward him for love and had grown ecstatic upon insufficient grounds. The lover in "One Way of Love" is one who, in spite of the fact that he has spent his whole life in perfecting his

love for the lady's sake and at the end receives no return for it, is yet able to bless all who win the heaven of a perfect love. "Love in a Life" and "Life in a Love": In the first, the lover seems to consider that unless he wins the lady of his heart, love must ever escape him, while in the second the lover feels that once having found the ideal, he has realized the full force of love; and through the whole of his life his love must follow it whether the lady reciprocates or not. Which of these lovers has the deeper nature, the one whose love does not blossom into full life without reciprocation, or the one whose love is sufficient for his life without the reciprocal love of the loved one? Do you think of any other interpretation of the two moods expressed in these poems? Might there be a more symbolical way of looking at them, as indicated in the notes to the poems in the *Camberwell Browning*, in which the poems would stand as symbols of an abstract ideal love?

In "Natural Magic" the lover expresses, by means of symbolism drawn from magic, the sudden transformation in his life upon the advent of the beloved one. In "Magical Nature" the lover's mood is such that he defies time to lessen his admiration of his lady, declaring that her beauty has for him the permanence of a jewel rather than that of a flower which time might fray. In the prologue to "Two Poets of Croisic" the mood is the same as that in "Magical Nature" — namely, the power of love to transform life from a dull and meaningless existence into one henceforth full of joy and gladness. "Wanting is — What?" shows the same thing, only in this there is the desire and need for a love that has never come, and while in "Apparitions" all was dark until love

came, in the last the world is recognized as being beautiful but lacking the touch which will give meaning to its beauty. Which do you think the more likely interpretation, this or the one referred to in the Notes? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. XI., p. 227.)

In "Never the Time and the Place" we have the mood of a lover who is chafing under restraints imposed by conditions, but who yet looks forward to reunion with the beloved one, even if it be not until after death.

Observe that there is but one of these lyrics wherein expression is given to a mood indicating that there are things of more importance in life than love, namely the second of the pair "Meeting at Night" and "Parting at Morning." Whether it be interpreted as spoken by the man or the woman, it shows that to this lover love is only an incident of his life. (For discussion as to the meaning of these lyrics see *Poetlore*, Vol. VII., 1895, April, May, and June-July.) C. R. Corson writes: "The Arcanum of the Garden of Eden has been revealed to them, the need of woman to man, the need of man to woman. It is this revelation that makes him find a path of gold in all his endeavors to provide for her; it has centupled his physical energies, nothing now too hard for him to achieve; all that her heart craves she shall have through him." Another writer says: "Don't you read it like this? 'Round the cape of a sudden came the sea' (the man is speaking) 'and the sun looked over the mountain's rim — and straight was a path of gold for him' (the sun) 'And the need of a world of men for me' (the man who must go back to the world of action he left last night). How plain!" Then there is the third possibility that the woman is speaking, and that she realizes that there is a path of glory in the

world of men for him in which she cannot share and for which she longs in order that she might companion him on his life's way. Which of these interpretations do you think fits best, and which represents the most exalted point of view ?

*Queries for Discussion.*—In comparison with love-lyrics by other poets should you say that these were noticeable for their lack of descriptions of personal beauty ? and do you feel that in consequence the intensity of the expression is lessened ? Or is there rather a greater depth and sincerity of love implied in such lyrics, because of their emphasis upon a perfect soul-union as the basis of love where the love is reciprocal, and a sense of the immeasurable worth of love to the one who loves whether it calls out any return or not ?

Which of these lyrics reaches upon the whole the most exalted expression of love, or are most of them equally exalted in spirit, the differences of mood being due to different conditions ?

The lyrics which are interspersed in "Ferishtah's Fancies" differ from those already considered, because they may be grouped together in a series, each one in the series giving expression to a mood growing out of the lives of two souls already united in a deep and true love. (For hints on these lyrics, see Notes, *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. XII., pp. 305, 307, 308, 309, 311, 313, 315, 316, 319.) "Round us the wild creatures" says a word against the tendency such a soul-wedded pair might have to become completely absorbed in each other, and forget they had any duties to humanity. "Wish no word unspoken" expresses the feeling that even injustice from the loved one is precious. In "You groped your way across my room," the feeling expressed is, that under the enlightening influence of a

true and constant love, all discords that enter into life will be but a ruffling of the surface of life's deep current, soon to disappear. In "Man I am and man would be," the lover declares that he asks nothing more in this life than his own human perception of the human beauty and goodness in the one he loves. In "So the head aches" he declares that the bodily weakness of the loved one is compensated for in her strength of mind and soul — greater than his, though he is physically so strong. In "When I vexed you," he welcomes chidings for small faults, because he knows in his own inmost consciousness that he has greater failings, she does not suspect, which deserve far sterner chidings than she ever gives. In "Once I saw a chemist," he declares that through the love he has known upon earth, he is able to conceive of heaven, which, however, cannot transcend the bliss of earth except in the fact that in heaven the bliss will last. A reminiscent mood is also reflected in "Verse making" showing that love had been with him so perfectly spontaneous and certain that without and misgivings or calculations as to the results, he immediately "told his love." In "Not with my soul, love," he expresses the desire that their union shall be complete, emotionally as well as spiritually. In "Ask not one least word of praise" his mood is that of one to whom speech in praise of the loved one is not sufficiently subtle for the expression of his inmost soul — a touch reveals his soul better.

This series of glimpses into a life hallowed by a perfect love is rounded out by the Epilogue to "Ferishtah's Fancies," which reveals the fact that the loved one is dead, and now haunting fears and doubts beset the man, that all the glory and beauty he has seen

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in the world, owes its existence entirely to the love which has surrounded him in a halo of light. Is it possible to read this series of lyrics connectedly without feeling that they grew out of the poet's own experience in life?

*Queries for Discussion.*—How does this set of lyrics compare with the others in the centering of the thought upon the spiritual rather than upon the material aspects of life and love?

Though these lyrics are not at all didactic, could you draw a lofty ideal of living from them?

In the remaining lyrics, point out any similarities of mood with those already considered.

Taken as a whole, do you find a remarkable unity of sentiment in all these lyrics, the differences being merely different phases of the same underlying sentiment?

Do these lyrics, on account of the unity of sentiment, give the impression of being more purely subjective than Browning's work usually is?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
—Symbolism and Workmanship of the Lyrics.

*Hints:* — Of the two lyrics from "Pippa Passes," "Give her but a least excuse to love me" is the more dramatic in form. In the two short stanzas a very definite picture is presented of the Queen, the page, and the maiden. Observe that this is done without any description whatever of any of them. How is it done, then? How much of the situation do you learn from the page's song alone? From the one word given to the Queen, we are able to conjure up a picture of her, attentive to, and evidently touched by the page's song, and this impression is made all the more strong by contrast with the maiden, whose few words show her careless and indifferent, not supposing the Queen



to be interested in the page's song. Notice that the latter part of each stanza is enclosed in parentheses, the form being indirect speech instead of direct — that is, the name of the person speaking is mentioned, and what they say is introduced by "said" in one place, "cried" in another, and so on. If it were not for this should we be able to guess at the personality of the boy who is singing and the person to whom he sings?

Does the second stanza express a phase of the mood any more intense than the first? Do you find any figures of speech in this poem? The line "Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part," without being imagery in the ordinary sense, is a symbolical way of saying that nothing would be too arduous for him to undertake for his lady.

Who is Kate the Queen? (See lines following the lyric, and *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, Vol. I., p. 258.)

The rhythm of this poem is very irregular, the number of feet and the kind of feet varying with each line, for example, the first line of the first stanza has five stresses with the unaccented syllable following the accented one; the second, two feet, each of which is a single accented syllable followed by a pause in the place of an unaccented syllable. The third line might be scanned as having either five or six stresses. In the first instance, "can" and "this" would both be treated as short syllables; in the second, "How" would be treated as an accented syllable followed by a pause in place of an unaccented syllable, and "can" would have an accent. Does it give the more musical effect to scan this line as having five stresses? In deciding a point like this would it be best to be guided

by the musical effect? The fourth line again has five stresses, but they are preceded instead of followed by the unaccented syllables. The sixth line might be scanned as having six stresses, in which case "to" would have an accent. Would it not, however, give a more musical effect to make "to" and the following syllable "e" both short and so give the line only five stresses? The next line has three stresses, the first followed by a pause, the other two preceded by the unaccented syllables. The seventh line has four, the accented syllable sometimes followed by two, sometimes by one unaccented syllable, and with an extra unaccented syllable at the beginning of the line. The eighth has four, preceded by two and sometimes by one unaccented syllable. The last has three, followed sometimes by one, sometimes by two unaccented syllables. The second stanza has the same distribution of stresses to the lines, except that the third and sixth lines of the stanza both have to be scanned with six stresses. For this reason it may be that the poet meant the third and sixth lines of the first stanza to be scanned with six stresses, so making the two stanzas counterparts of each other. There is some little variation in the placing of the short syllables. Point these out. Notice that the rhymes are sometimes double and sometimes single. Do you find this poem any the less musical for its irregularity and complexity?

The second of the lyrics from "Pippa Passes" is far simpler in construction, but is a trifle more metaphorical in its expression. Point out which of the lines express the feeling directly and which express it by means of figures. The rhythm and rhymes are also simple, the lines alternating between four and

three stresses, the rhymes also alternating. What slight departures are there from this regularity?

In "Meeting at Night" the first stanza paints in a very few words the evening landscape. The language is perfectly straightforward and simple, breaking only once into the simile of "the waves that leap in fiery ringlets." There is also sufficient action in it to indicate the situation; in the second stanza the scene is sketched still further but loses itself in the climax of the situation. Is there any imagery at all in the second stanza? The background of sea-waves seems to be suggested in this poem by the arrangement of the rhymes, the crest of the wave being in the middle of the stanza, where the couplet occurs. In each stanza there is also a climax of motion in these two lines which dies away in the first in the quenching of the speed of the boat and in the second in the silent beating of two hearts. The lines all have four stresses preceded sometimes by one, sometimes by two unaccented syllables. Is there any regularity in the alternations of one and two short syllables? There are two places where two accented syllables come together, in line 1 and line 10. In the first instance, "gray sea," it seems to add breadth to the picture because of the longer time it takes to say it, while in the second instance emphasis is added.

Point out the variations from the first two stanzas in the third, "Parting at Morning."

In "Song" there is hardly any imagery. The lover emphasizes his feeling through his admiration of the beloved one's golden tresses, an emblem of her nature, which he declares is pure gold. Notice also that this lyric is not addressed to his lady, but to the people who do not love her, and whom he challenges to

witness her worth. The lines have four stresses, the first four in stanza 1 having the unaccented syllable following the accented one, and the last two having the unaccented syllable followed by the accented one. This results in giving the stanza four double rhymes and two single rhymes. What variations do you observe in the second stanza?

In "My Star," the expression all through is symbolical, the beloved one being compared with a star, and this star being further particularized as like an angled spar. For full explanation of this simile see notes to the poem in *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IV., p. 377. What other things is the Star compared with? In each of these similes a different aspect of the beloved one's nature is pictured. Is there a mixed metaphor in the last line?

The first eight lines of this poem have two stresses and the last five have four stresses. In the first and third the accented syllables are at the beginning and the end of the line. In the second and fourth, the first accented syllable is preceded by two and the second accented syllable is preceded by one unaccented syllable. This produces a pleasing secondary rhythm. The four following lines are accented in the same way. In the other lines the accented syllables are sometimes preceded by one and sometimes by two unaccented syllables. Is there any regularity in this irregularity forming a secondary rhythm similar to that noticed in the shorter lines? Notice the distribution of the rhymes and especially how the shorter lines and the longer lines are linked together by a rhyme in common.

"Misconceptions" resembles "My Star" in the symbolism of the language. The thought is pre-

sented in the first stanza symbolically, and in the second one the same thought is interpreted. The lines in this poem have three stresses, except the last two, which have four. The first line begins with a stress and is followed with two short syllables, the second accented syllable is also followed by two unaccented syllables, but the third by only one, these two making the rhyme. Are there any variations from these arrangements of accents in any of the other four stressed lines? Line 6 has four stresses, the accented syllable being followed by two unaccented syllables except at the end of the line, where it is followed by only one unaccented syllable. Is there any variation from this in the other longer lines? The rhymes in this poem are all double with only two to each stanza.

In "One Way of Love," each stanza gives a little different phase of the thought with different symbolism. Roses the lover had strewn for a month, merely with the chance that they might take his lady's eye. Then for many months he had striven to perfect his music, hoping she might ask him to sing. Then, in the last stanza, the climax of devotion is reached and at the same time the climax of renunciation. Is the language in this poem at all figurative? The rhythm is regular almost all through, the only breaks being in the fifth line of each stanza, where the line begins and ends with an accented syllable. Also the sixth line of the third stanza begins with an accent. The rhymes are also regular, every stanza being made up of three rhymed couplets.

In "Love in a Life" and "Life in a Love" is the expression more symbolistic than realistic? Point out any examples you may find of figures of speech in these two lyrics. Notice that the rhythm of these is

very irregular. The first three lines each have two stresses occurring in different places in each line ; in 1, the first and last syllables have the stress ; in 2, the second and last syllables have the stress ; in 3, the third and sixth have the stress. Notice the variety in the distribution of short syllables in these three lines, resulting in which one having the most syllables ? All the remaining lines have four stresses. In 4, the syllables with a stress are the first, third, sixth, and ninth ; in 5, the first, fourth, seventh, ninth ; in 6, the first, fourth, seventh, ninth ; in 7, the third, sixth, ninth, eleventh ; in 8, the second, fifth, eighth, eleventh. What variations in the distribution of short syllables result from this ? Do you discover any recurring rhythm in the irregularities either within the stanza or in comparing the two stanzas with each other ? The rhyme scheme is also quite complicated, the first three lines rhyming respectively with the last three, the first two being single and the third a double rhyme. Then, the two remaining lines in the middle of the stanza rhyme together with a double rhyme. With so much irregularity of rhythm it might be supposed that the effect would be that of prose rather than poetry, but it will be found when read that the rhythm is smooth and harmonious. "Life in a Love" has still other irregularities. It begins and ends with three lines rhymed together, each of which has but one stress. All the remaining lines have four stresses distributed as follows : 4, second, fourth, sixth, eighth syllables ; 5, second, fifth, eighth, ninth ; 6, first, third, sixth, eighth ; 7, third, fifth, eighth, tenth ; 8, second, fifth, seventh, ninth ; 9, second, fifth, eighth, tenth ; 10, third, fifth, eighth, tenth ; 11, second, fifth, eighth, tenth ; 12, third, fifth, seventh,



ninth ; 13, second, fourth, sixth, ninth ; 14, second, fifth, eighth, tenth ; 15, third, fifth, seventh, ninth ; 16, second, fourth, seventh, ninth ; 17, second, fourth, seventh, ninth ; 18, second, fifth, seventh, ninth ; 19, third, fifth, eighth, tenth. The rhymes are arranged in groups of four, the first and second group have the first and fourth lines rhyming together, and the second and third ; the two remaining groups have the first and third, second and fourth lines rhyming.

“ Natural Magic ” is another example of the symbol being presented in the first stanza, and the feeling it illustrates in the second stanza. Aside from this larger symbolism, is the language of the second stanza entirely realistic, or is the thought in this presented by means of poetic figures ? The verse in this has three stresses to the first, second, and last lines of the stanzas, and four to all the other lines. The general structure of the stanzas is that of an accented syllable preceded by two unaccented syllables, but the variations are numerous ; for example, in line 1, the first syllable has an accent and the last has not ; in lines 2 and 3, the first accented syllable is preceded by only one unaccented syllable ; the rest of the line is regular. Line 4 is regular, but 5, again, has only one unaccented syllable at the beginning. 6 has an extra unaccented syllable to end with. 7 and 8 both begin with only one unaccented syllable and end with an extra unaccented, and 9 is like 1 except that it, too, begins with one unaccented syllable. Point out any variations from this you may find in the second stanza. The rhymes in this poem have quite a complex arrangement, — 1 and 6 rhyme together with a double rhyme, and between these is a quatrain of which the first and fourth rhyme together and the second and third are



single. Then line 6 forms with the remaining three another quatrain of which the first and fourth, second and third lines rhyme, all double rhymes.

In "Magical Nature," how is the thought presented, in poetic figures or realistically? Observe that rhyme and rhythm are both very simple in this little poem, though even here there is some variation. For example, in the first stanza, lines 1 and 3 have six stresses, and 2 and 4 have seven; while in the second stanza, 1 and 4 have six, and 2 and 3 seven. In the second stanza, also, there is a single rhyme instead of double rhymes between the second and fourth lines. What irregularity in the metre results from this? Is there any other irregularity in the metre?

The little lyric which makes the prologue to "Two Poets of Croisic," presents the thought in three different symbols, each more intense than the preceding one, and only in the very last line in the simple phrase "That was thy face" does it become apparent that it is a love lyric. The rhythm consists of three and two stresses. Line 1 has three, on the first, fourth, and sixth syllables; 2, on the first and fourth; 3, on the first, fourth, and sixth; and 4, on the first and fourth. The other stanzas are exactly the same, but it is to be noticed that the quantity of the unaccented syllable "starved" is so much greater than the other unaccented syllables in the first stanza that it has a very strong secondary accent, — so much of a one, indeed, that if the form were not set by the other stanzas, it would seem more natural to scan this line as if it had four instead of three stresses. In this case the line would consist of two feet made up of an unaccented syllable between two accented syllables. Also in the third line of the third stanza, "God's" has a strong

secondary accent, so strong that the line taken alone could just as well be scanned as having three stresses preceded by three unaccented syllables. Yet the rhythm of the whole poem is better preserved by scanning it like the other three stressed lines. The rhyme scheme here is perfectly simple.

In "Wanting is — What?" the symbolism is so mystically expressed that opinions differ as to the interpretation, as we have already seen. Aside from its larger symbolism, is the language of the poem figurative or metaphorical? The rhythm is interesting from the regularity of the irregularity. The first line of two stresses, with two unaccented syllables between, sets the pattern for the rest of the stanza, every line of which, through line 11, begins with the same arrangement of syllables. From line 5, through line 10, two more stresses are added, with sometimes one, sometimes two unaccented syllables preceding. Point out these variations, also the lines where unaccented syllables are added at the end making double rhymes. The last three lines vary from the other short lines in what way? Observe the arrangement of rhymes.

What peculiarities of rhyme and rhythm do you observe in "Never the Time and the Place" farther than that the lines vary in the number of stresses, some having four, some three, some two?

*Query for Discussion.* — Is the beauty of these lyrics due almost entirely to the variety and harmony of their rhythmical music, or is it helped on by alliteration and choice of words?

On the whole, the "Ferishtah's Fancies" lyrics are realistic in language, though there are exceptions. Point out all the poetic symbols and images you may observe. The rhythm of these will be found to be

more regular than that of the lyrics so far considered. "Round us the wild creatures" has six stresses, except lines 4 and 12, which have seven. The unaccented syllables follow the accented ones except at the end of the lines. The only other variation to be noted is the changing of places, in line 1, of the second accented and unaccented syllables. "Wish no word unspoken" has lines of six and seven stresses, 2, 5, and 6 having seven, the relation of the accented to the unaccented syllables being the same as in the preceding lyric. "You groped your way across my room" has seven stresses, the unaccented syllable preceding the accented syllable. Do you observe any irregularities at all in this? "Man I am and man would be" has eight stresses, with the unaccented syllable following the accented syllable. "So the head aches" has four stresses to the line, with considerable variation in the placing of the unaccented syllables. For example, in line 1 the first, fourth, seventh, ninth have the accent; in 2 the first, fourth, sixth, ninth; in 3 the third, fifth, eighth, tenth; in 4 the first, fourth, sixth, eighth. Show what other differences there are in the other stanzas. "When I vexed you" has three stresses, preceded sometimes by one, sometimes by two unaccented syllables. Observe also that there is sometimes an extra unaccented syllable at the end of the line. "Once I saw a chemist" has six stresses to all the lines but the last of each stanza, which has seven. The unaccented syllables follow the accented ones, with a few exceptions to be noted. "Verse-making was least of my virtues" has five stresses, with sometimes two, sometimes one unaccented syllable preceding. Line 2 is perhaps the hardest line in the poem

to scan, but it will be found to run quite smoothly if the accents are placed upon the third, sixth, ninth, twelfth, and fifteenth syllables. Notice that in this line there are two unaccented syllables to every accented one. Are there any other lines similar to this one? There is a slight variation in the printing of this poem in the nine-volume and latest two-volume English edition. The *Camberwell Browning* follows the latter, and prints the phrases "And made verse" and "I made love" as part of the fourth line in each stanza. Printed so, it simply adds another foot to the line, which then has an internal rhyme. But in the nine-volume English edition, these phrases are printed in a line by themselves, and in that case each syllable would have a stress. Which seems to you the preferable way of printing and scanning it?

"Not with my soul, love" has five stresses, usually preceded by a short syllable, though many of the lines begin with a stress which is followed by a short syllable, thus bringing two short syllables together; see lines 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 10. The last line has but two stresses, on the first and last syllables. "Ask not one least word of praise" has four stresses, with unaccented syllable following, the line ending, however, with an accent. Do you note any irregularities at all in this poem?

The "Epilogue" varies in the number of stresses, for example, in the first stanza line 1 has five, followed by an unaccented syllable; 2 has six, 3 has six, 4 has seven. Of the other stanzas, the second has: line 1, six; 2, six; 3, six; 4, seven. Third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh stanzas: 1, six; 2, seven; 3, six; 4, seven.

Notice the various effects in the rhyming of these

lyrics and compare with the preceding group in regard to their complexity.

Of the remaining lyrics, "Now" has four stresses to the line. "Poetics" is somewhat irregular. In the first stanza, the stresses, in line 1, fall on the first, fourth, sixth, eighth, tenth syllables; in 2, on the first, fourth, sixth, eighth, tenth, twelfth, fourteenth; in 3, on the first, third, fifth, seventh, ninth, eleventh; in 4, on the first, third, fifth, seventh, ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth. In the second stanza, the stresses fall, in line 1, on the first, third, fifth, seventh, ninth, syllables; in 2, on the first, third, fifth, seventh, ninth, eleventh syllables; in 3, on the first, third, fifth, seventh, ninth, eleventh; in 4, on the first, third, fifth, seventh, ninth, eleventh. "Summum Bonum" has lines of five stresses preceded by two unaccented syllables, and lines of three stresses with sometimes one, sometimes two unaccented syllables between. "A Pearl, a Girl" has four stresses, sometimes preceded by one, sometimes by two unaccented syllables. Point out the variations.

The sonnet form is used only occasionally by Browning, and from the irregularity of the stresses in "Eyes, calm beside thee," it is evident that his muse was restive under its bonds. It is true that there are fourteen lines and each line has five stresses, but the short syllables are varied in the poet's usual free manner, and the rhymes in the octette do not follow the prescribed order at all. Point out how it differs from the usual sonnet form.

*Queries for Discussion.* — Where the symbolism in these poems is drawn from nature is it vague and general rather than special?

What is its character when drawn from science?

How many different kinds of symbolism do you observe, and which kind predominates?

From this study of the workmanship of these lyrics should you conclude that Browning could not write a lyric, as some critics have said, or that his lyrics really have a more organic music than most other poets have been able to compass?

Does this result from the fact that the liberties he takes in the distribution of accented and unaccented syllables make it possible for him to combine frequently the sense accent with the rhythmical accent at the same time that he escapes the wrenched accents so likely to occur in strict rhythm? If he has any wrenched accents point out whether they are upon weak syllables or whether strong syllables are left without an accent, and discuss which produce the more unpleasant effect.

Could it be said that, since a sense accent never falls on a weak syllable, a rhythmical accent on a weak syllable is more unpleasant than no accent on a strong syllable, when it has, as frequently, no sense accent?

## PORTRAITS OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES

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Compare with these, Charles and Polyxena in "King Victor and King Charles," i. 237, 327; "Andrea del Sarto," v. 36, 284; Guido and Pompilia, Pietro and Violante, in "The Ring and the Book," vi., vii.; the new Alkestis and Admetos, in Conclusion to "Balaustion's Adventure," viii. 80, 289; "Doctor —," ix. 213, 321; "Adam, Lilith, and Eve," ix. 246, 327; the duke and the druggist's daughter in "Parleying with Daniel Bartoli," xii. 89, 326.

### I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* —The Situation and the Characters.

*Hints* : —The story each of these poems has to tell is, how the various characters are placed with reference to the different situations they face. Their ways of meeting these situations reveal their nature. For general summaries of the subject-matter, see *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, as cited above.

The husband in "By the Fireside" imagines a situation he will have to meet when he is an old



man left alone by the younger generation. The situation he anticipates is sketched realistically in stanzas i. and ii., so that we see him, by the fire, steadily turning the pages of an old Greek book ; hear the shutters flap in the November wind-skurries, and the youngsters cautiously planning to steal out while he is so absorbed. But stanza i. prepares us to understand that this is only the frame of an external sort of portrait. It is the soul's ripe autumnal hue, and the music of her voices with which he is planning to solace himself in life's November. It is an inward portrait of himself that he will draw, in the act of mentally realizing what his love for his wife and hers for him have meant.

The Greek he pictures himself as deep in (stanza iii.) is, as he explains in stanzas iv. and v., but an outside frame for an inside archway, a network of impressions and recollections opening a wide vista through his life from age to youth and Italy. He passes on through this to live his love over again, beginning more externally in descriptive first impressions of out-door scenes enjoyed together in Italy (stanzas vii. to xx.); then more and more internally penetrating in the remainder of the poem to the significance to them of their joint emotions, to be realized in old age, as these first impressions of the earlier part of their day out-doors together were ripened for them, at second view, on their return, in the evening. Notice that stanzas xxi.—xxx. introduce this second division of more introspective reminiscence with an apostrophe to his wife and the blest old age to which such youth must lead. Then stanza xxxi. takes up the theme, dropped in stanza xx., of the bird there spoken of, with a noonday picture of it stilled by the

menace of two hawks. Stanza xxxii. rapidly takes his memory to afternoon, and the growing silence and significance of evening. Stanzas xxxiii.—xlvi. review the home-return and its feelings; xlvii. presents the climax of emotion; xlviii. links this with the out-door influence; and, finally, xlix.—liii. sum up this love experience as the potency for the distinctive fruitage of his soul henceforth.

Discuss further the descriptions, allusions, and analogies employed. Do you think he was thinking, literally, of a learned book, or of that as a symbol of the volume of experiences age collects? Is the book really, then, to be all prose, no verse; or is he playfully seeing himself “as others see him,” especially as children look upon an old man, as if for him the romance of life is over, while he means to show it is enhanced? For information as to localities, the relation of these with Mr. and Mrs. Browning, allusions, etc., see *Camberwell Browning*. What idea does the poem give you of the man personally, as to his sensibility, observation of nature, culture, and character? What do you gather as to the woman?

“Any Wife to Any Husband” is a counterpart portrait of a wife who, like the husband of “By the Fireside,” cleaves to the love she has experienced with only the more intensity when life is ripe. The situation she is facing — her approaching death — comes out in the first stanza (line 6). She apprehends, although her husband would be equally absorbed in his love for her could she live, that now he will not be. The inner situation implied in this, considered with reference to her own and her husband’s character, occupies her outpouring throughout the poem. Wherein her husband will fail in devotion comes out

how, in lines 7-24? Does she claim that his steadfastness is due merely to her personal charm? Still, her desire that his fidelity perfectly correspond with her own ideal of love for them both bursts out again in lines 25-33. In lines 34-48 what praise does she again give him, and what does this tell you of his character? Finally (lines 49-78), she expresses just what the further point of view is which she exclaims against with passion again (79-102), upholding her own point of view, in stanzas xviii. and xix., maintaining that he could do as much or more, in the two following stanzas; until with the last half-line of the poem she rises to a climax of desire for this and doubt of it. How far does the poem reveal the character of this wife and husband? Is it a less objective portrait of the two than that given in "By the Fireside"? Why?

What reason can you give to justify the guess that the first poem is a sort of dramatization of Browning as a husband, and his point of view; and the second a sort of dramatization of Mrs. Browning, not necessarily as his own wife, but as a type of such a woman's point of view?

"My Last Duchess," "The Flight of the Duchess," and "The Statue and the Bust" belong together in portraying husbands and wives whose environment is not modern, as that of the two foregoing poems is. They are all almost mediæval. Even the portraits of Guido and Pompilia in "The Ring and the Book" are appropriate to a period when the legal or generally accepted views of a husband's authority over a wife had become somewhat more questionable.

"The Flight of the Duchess," though it probably

belongs in its setting to a later time and a northern country, Germany, ranks with the first two Italian poems because of the mediævalism affected by the husband, against which the Duchess revolted. The situation, accordingly, in all these poems is alike, being largely created by exactions of the husband enforced in a way foreign to the conditions allowable between modern husbands and wives. The situations sketched lie, therefore, in a more physical plane than in the first two poems. In "My Last Duchess," for example, instead of a situation created as in "By the Fireside" out of the husband's claim that the love experience of youth is spiritually fulfilled in old age, or out of the wife's claim, in the following poem, that only absolute fidelity after the death of the wife suits the ideal beauty of a supreme love, is a situation so far removed from these that it consists in a husband's arranging with an envoy for a successor to the wife he had ordered should die. All that is involved in this situation comes out in the course of this interview. While exhibiting his last wife's portrait to this envoy, this husband shows her nature and his own, how? Notice that you gather at once, since he speaks of the painting as that of his last Duchess "looking as if she were alive," that she is now dead; also, that he is a collector and appreciator of art; that the two men are standing, since he invites the visitor to sit, etc.; that he is sensitive now, and has been, to the admiration his wife's beauty excites, since he warns his visitor, "by design," that the artist was a monk, and then launches out in details of resentment against the Duchess for being of so gladsome a temperament that she showed interest in more than himself; that he was so proud and taciturn in his demands that to order her death

was the only way to maintain them. Observe the threatening effect, after this explanation, of the repetition of his first words, "There she stands as if alive." How do you learn that the visitor has been sitting during all the talk? What other picturesque details come out in the remaining lines to complete the husband's character and illustrate the situation?

The situation and the characters of the husband and wife in "The Flight of the Duchess" agree in important respects with those in the preceding poem. Wherein do they differ, and in what are they alike? The situation is made clear by one speaker, also; but he is not a prominent personage in the story, as in the other poem; and observe how many more personages are involved in the story, and how many more details and side-lights can and do come out, because an observer, this huntsman, closely allied to the household, is telling the tale to a trusted friend.

Show how the situation is presented, so that the country, the father and the mother of the present Duke, the circumstances that led to the son's affectation of mediævalism, the conventionalisms he introduced, the wife he chose, the way she came to the castle, her nature and looks, her husband's notions of wifely propriety, their effect on the bride, and finally the surprising events that followed are related with familiarity and vividness: the hunt; the coming of the Gipsies, the peculiar character and habits of the Northland Gipsies, and especially of the Gipsy crone; her interview, first with the Duke, then with the Duchess; her incantation and its effect, and how much of this and under what circumstances he, the story-teller, overheard or otherwise knew; what happened when he came to himself, and how he

helped the two off on horseback ; and, last of all, how the thirty years since he last set eyes on the Duchess have passed at the castle, and under what circumstances he is disburdening himself of the whole story, confessing his cherished loyalty to the runaway Duchess and his scorn of his master the Duke.

How does the poem lead you to explain the characters of this husband and wife ? To account for the effect of the Gipsy's song upon Jacynth, the huntsman, the Gipsy herself, and the Duchess ? To delight in the flight that followed ?

Are the huntsman's final words, at the last line of the poem, a fair summing up of the characters and the situation ? What idea does his story-telling give of his own character ? Of his relations with Jacynth ?

The relations of the husband and wife are not the main concern in "The Statue and the Bust ;" but the situation grows out of these, and through it we get a glimpse of the husband's character as well as of the wife's, what sort of claims he makes upon her, and how he enforces them, and how they do not, in this case, lead to the wife's flight. Show, in detail, how the whole story is brought out in narration of what the Florentines tell about the statue, by giving dramatically what the lady said, what the bridesmaids saw and whispered, what the Duke said and looked, felt and perhaps expressed ; the effect of their interview on the bridegroom's talk and action, and of this on the lovers' desires, talk, and inaction ; and show, finally, how the poet's comment on their letting "I dare not wait upon I would" applies to the situation and the characters, remembering that the inquiry at this time is not to discuss the morality of his com-



ment, but merely to get what is expressed in its relation to the story and the characters.

Modern characters and a situation of a merely spiritual kind between the husband and the wife relate "James Lee's Wife" with the first two poems of this series rather than with those just reviewed. The lyrical treatment brings out the situation, — which is merely the recognition by the wife of the husband's estrangement, — and presents the characters of the two, through the emotional expression of the wife's love, in much the same manner as in "Any Wife to Any Husband." What are the different moods of the wife; and what do they tell you of the place where they are; of herself, her love, her mind and tastes and development; and of her husband's nature? In "IV. — Along the Beach" and "IX. — On Deck" more comes out than in the other divisions of the poem as to her husband's point of view and personality and her own personal appearance. What do you gather as to these? How do you account for the extreme harshness of her reference to her own hair and skin in stanza viii. of "On Deck"? Is this to be taken literally? Notice how the sub-titles of the different divisions, "At the Window," "By the Fireside," etc., give a stage setting that suggests the terms of her expression. Might these similes as to her hair and skin be suggested by the cargo of the boat, — logs and bales of hair, that may be imagined as piled near by her on the deck of a French coaster, — or is it better to attribute these similes to overstatement belonging to her characteristic intensity?

"A Forgiveness" and "Beatrice Signorini" are counterpart pictures, in so far as both show how a



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certain type of husband and a certain type of wife resented and treated an indulgence of their spouses in a superficial affair. The jealousy and pride of the husband of "A Forgiveness" leads to actual violence against both the wife and her lover; while that of the wife, "Beatrice Signorini," leads her to a deed of violence, less tragic but more effective, against the rival's portrait. But point out the many differences, both in the manipulation of the story (which, in the one case, is through the medium of the husband's monologue giving his point of view, and in the other, through the poet's narrative giving all points of view) and in the elements entering into the jealousy and the differences in the characters of the three persons in each poem.

Contrast the rivals, particularly the insignificance of the man in "A Forgiveness," the superiority of Artemisia; and the effect of this difference.

Is jealousy the motive of the husband's act in "A Forgiveness"? Why then did he wait to punish his wife, and why did he punish her at all when he did, since he had then learned that she really loved himself? But if jealousy had no part in his act, why did he stab the rival? Consider whether "A Forgiveness" is really a poem of forgiveness or revenge, or both, or whether the title is satiric. Can that be said to be forgiveness which finds satisfaction only in the death of the person forgiven? Is there anything to show that the husband regretted his action? Ask where the husband is when he tells his story; to whom he relates it; what he was, — did he hold his position of honor or trust through worth or birth? and in what line do you infer it was? Did this husband love his wife at first, and was she at all justified in

resenting his living so much away from her? What light does this throw on her character? Why did she take the course of action he describes? Was it through her lack of love for him, or was he at fault, or were circumstances to blame? Do you admire the pride shown thereafter by both? On which did this trial by silence bear harder? Do you think the wife's second confession (of the truth this time) deserved the reception it got? What do you think of the motives of this husband and wife? Was either of them justified in the action taken? Did the husband recognize the lover from the first? Note the lines, "— or his who wraps — Still plain I seem to see! — About his head The *idle* cloak;" also, any other references to the same effect. Do you suppose the lover became a monk to elude the husband's vengeance, or do you think he may have gone into the monastery because his life was completely broken, through the incident with the wife? What was the monk's fate at last, and did he deserve it?

The situation which disturbs the relations of Elvire and her husband, when they visit Pornic fair and see Fifine, is a conflict, in practice rather than in theory, between their points of view as to how completely a supreme love should assert its spiritual ascendancy over lesser attractions. With reference to the wife, how does her situation and point of view differ from or agree with that of the other wives in the preceding poems? The husband in character and point of view is much the same as the husband of "Any Wife to Any Husband." Although Elvire is walking by his side, instead of about to die, like the wife in the earlier poem, it is to be noticed that she grows shadowy from time to time, and especially at

the end of the poem, as seen through her husband's eyes; that this is in accordance with the argument he is carrying on, wherein he makes the wife considered as a phantom judge herself considered as the real wife. In this way she partakes of the nature of that purely spiritual side of love with which he identifies her, and of the experimental side, also, through which she, too, must be judged.

Follow his talk, not in particulars, but in its general trend, throughout the poem, in order to see what his argument setting forth the situation as he sees it amounts to; then notice what his action is, and judge, taking him at his word, how it agrees or can be reconciled with the argument. What do both argument and action reveal, — the first as to his culture and habits, æsthetic sensibility and taste, ideals and aspiration; the second, as to his will and character?

For example, the general trend of his argument admits that there is a love which is essential and supreme for each two who feel it, but that this is spiritual and absolute and can only be known relatively. It is recognized the more clearly through the development of the individual consciousness, and that is developed by means of sense in relations with others in actual life.

His opening speeches (stanzas vi.—xiii.) oppose conventional life to Bohemianism, and strive to find the secret of Fifi's real value as an individual, in contrast with Elvire and the other types of women he instances (lines 149-909).

What has this to do with the argument? Concede that it illustrates the worth of each individual soul, and that this worth may be perceived by every one despite imperfection through sympathetic relationship; still,

does he need to have taken care to prepare the way for his final action (see stanza cxxxii.) to prove to himself in this case what he accepts in general?

Elvire objects (stanza lx., see especially lines 917-922), showing her distrust of sense as really ministrant to soul. Notice all the speeches attributed to her, how they reveal her character slightly and incidentally, but throw suspicion on his, preparing the reader for this final action of his as being just what she guesses will follow his good argument for enabling the intuitions of the soul to transcend sense.

Despairing of explanation, in words, of the indefinite emotional appeal sense makes to soul as in music (lxi.), he turns to nature (lxii. and foll.), and then (lines 1009-1143) likens the use of the false or fleeting and relative in human attachments to attain the true and ultimate in human development to motion through the unstable, as in swimming, so that progress is made and the need for light and air met also.

Elvire objects (lxix.) that if development through the recognition of individual value were what he really desired, he would look for it in all men and not in women only. He acknowledges (lines 1154-1155) that this parry shifts his argument from the general to the particular test, i. e. not whether the reasoning is good, but whether he is reasoning disinterestedly and will apply it disinterestedly. To meet this he claims (1162-1371) that the materialism and selfishness of men are not qualified to educe growth as the idealism and unselfishness of women are.

Again Elvire is made to object that if this be so, there is no need of a *Fifine* to do him such service less well than the Elvire he acknowledges best. To which he rejoins that a poorer craft induces the more

skill in the manager. The use of any means is to attain a genuine aim. It is the attraction of art that it uses means towards an end, transcends its processes, does not pretend to *be* absolutely, but in simulating the truth teaches what reality is (1372-1529). So, in general, through the perception of life without pretence that it is absolutely true or permanent, a sense of truth, of permanence in flux itself, is evolved. This is exemplified widely, in a dream he tells (1539-2226), with reference to human nature and social relations. (See digest of the poem in *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, Vol. IX., p. 288, also passages in Introduction, pp. xiii, xvi-xxi.)

Does the conclusion that the ripe nature knows the ascendancy of soul and the good of constancy in love accuse the husband of lack of development? But is Elvire as developed as he? Are her ideas of married constancy the fruit of experience, or intuition, or convention?

"Bad Dreams" gives expression alternately to a wife's and a husband's mood in regard to each other, at a time when some discord of mistrust, on his part, and consciousness of it, on her part, has broken in on the harmony of their love. The under consciousness of this seems to have come out in these dreams they have which they tell each other. The first is apparently the wife's. What does it reveal of her secret uneasiness as to her husband's brooding? Does it seem to be an unconscious revelation of her soul? And should you judge from it that her love was true, deep? The second is chiefly the dream of the husband which he tells her. From the opening stanzas addressed to her, before telling the dream itself, what idea do you get of his blaming her and being

primed to accuse her of the nameless evil he has but dreamed about her, yet puts faith in superstitiously, as if it were real? How do you get this idea? Is the dream itself of the toil of men and women at a dance without gayety a sign of a morbid mind as to the relations of men and women? What is the dream? Is it specific enough to suggest what his quarrel with her may be? As to the charge itself, how does it reveal him as still shaken and under the spell of the dream? Notice his break off (line 62), and the protestation, first, that his respect shall stay firm, and then, that now she is there in the flesh she must explain, and not object that it was merely a dream, etc. She follows this with another dream (lines 86-100). Do you think its absurdity and inconsequence really dreamlike? Do her dream and her manner about his convince you of her innocence of heart and mood? Can you suppose it merely a clever turning off of the inquisitory air he has shown? "Bad Dreams," III., is supposably the man's dream and is suggestive, but so very vaguely so, of personal relations or situations, that one may fancy what he pleases about it. How would you explain its congruity with the other dreams, and with the situation between these two? Does the implied meaning, suggested in *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, p. 366, suit, or can you think of something closer to the figure of forest and city becoming a curse to each other? The last dream is obviously the wife's. Has it the same whimsical quality her second dream had? Or has it rather the pathetic, almost heart-worn character her first one had? What should you infer from that of the genuineness or slight nature of her love? What does it tell you of his? And do you



think her impression of him as revealed in this last dream is worth more than his of her?

*Queries for Discussion.* — Do the varieties of character presented in these portraits of husbands and wives differ distinctly from one another; or may they be classed, with slight differences, under a few general types? How many such are there, and how many may be added, or classed with these, on comparison with the husbands and wives in "King Victor and King Charles," "Andrea del Sarto," "The Ring and the Book," the "Parleying with Daniel Bartoli," etc. (see list before given)?

Do the situations differ much; and how often do they arise from the desire of one or the other for exclusive devotion, from a rival's attractions, or outside social relations?

Is the husband's point of view in the first poem, or the wife's in the second, the finer, in that he is taken up with his own fidelity and has nothing to say as to hers, while she is concerned that his shall equal hers? Is it a token of elevated love to desire that the loved one's return should be perfectly reciprocal, or is this inconsistent with a high degree of individual development of character?

Is there room for doubt that the Duke of Ferrara had his last Duchess put to death? "He succeeded and he seems to be proud of it," says Professor Corson ("Introduction to Browning," p. 87), "in shutting off all her life currents . . . and we must suppose that she then sank slowly and uncomplainingly away. . . . 'I gave commands' certainly must not be understood to mean commands for her death." Again (preface to third edition), he says he referred to Browning "the divided opinion as to the meaning"



of this expression ; that the poet “ made no reply, for a moment, and then said, meditatively, ‘ Yes, I meant that the commands were that she should be put to death,’ and then, after a pause, added . . . as if the thought had just started in his mind, ‘ Or he might have had her shut up in a convent.’ ” Is this question of consequence æsthetically or historically, or both ? See Symonds’s “ Renaissance in Italy,” Vol. III., chapter vii., for historical examples of such marital commands. Which action best suits the character of the Duke and the Duchess ? How does it agree with the Riccardi’s imprisonment of his wife in “ The Statue and the Bust ” ? (See “ The Statue and the Bust,” a Parable, *Poet-love*, Vol. X., p. 398, for a similar instance.)

In “ The Flight of the Duchess ” can any explanation be made upon natural grounds for the change in the appearance of the Gipsy Queen which the teller of the story noticed ? Was the wife’s attraction towards the Gipsies one of race, freedom from artificial restraint, or of an emotional and happy natural life as opposed to a cold and formal subordination ?

Is James Lee’s wife unlovable ? Is it a defect in James Lee’s character, or is it natural that he should tire of intensity ?

For whom do we feel the most sympathy, — the deceived priest, the deceived husband, or the deceiving wife of “ A Forgiveness ” ? Whose love is the sincerest ?

Is the argument of Elvire’s husband sophistical, or is he insincere, or is his will weak, and his character cruder than his intellect ?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— The Relationship and its Possibilities.

*Hints* : — Observe what the nature of the relationship is between these husbands and wives, and test its value for them by noticing what it is actually capable of for each in developing them and making life worth more to them.

The husband, in "By the Fireside," supplies his own estimate of his relationship with his wife and of its infinitely expansible worth to him in making his life worth while. And the wife, in the second poem, is so far in agreement with such an idea of the perpetual worth of a supreme love that for her it is capable of absorbing her whole heart ; but, if we take her word for it, it is not capable of so absorbing her husband's. If for him the relationship were equally absorbing, even in her absence, her idea of all its capabilities for both of them would have been met. Would this prove to be development equally for him ? Might he not claim, as Elvire's husband does, that there are other relationships and points of view in life, and that it is a question for each individual nature to ask as to what educes its quality most effectively ? Would the idea held by the husband of "By the Fireside" have satisfied the craving of this type of wife, and would it carry out the utmost capability of the relationship ?

Is there an intenser strain in the idea of the relationship held by James Lee's wife ? What can you derive from the poem as to James Lee's idea of their relationship ? Is there any justification of his ennui suggested, or was it akin to that of the hero of "Another Way of Love" ?

Is the husband of "By the Fireside," in a still closer sense, a supplementary figure to the wife of "Any Wife to Any Husband" because he is trying to meet such a wife's idea of the possibilities of their relationship ?

Can you judge how far he is indebted to her for the initiation of the idea in which he shares? Notice, moreover, that, as Browning paints him, he is anticipating what he will do in an old age not yet actually reached. Compare "St. Martin's Summer" as a picture of what such a husband might feel in presence of an attraction after his wife's death, although he recognized it to be of a lesser sort. Which conquered in that poem? Is he actually "ghost bereft," or does he only fear to be?

Which of the husbands in the remaining poems are more like the husband of "By the Fireside," in their idea of their marriage relationship and its possibilities; and which are more like James Lee? Is there in any of Browning's work any double of the husband of the first poem to be found (except by implication in "One Word More," "The Wall" — Prologue to "Pacchiarotto," "Never the Time and the Place," and other such thinly veiled autobiographical poems?) outside of the lovers,—such as Valence in "Colombe's Birthday," Caponsacchi in "The Ring and the Book," etc.? What inference do you draw from this as to Browning's observation of life?

The desire of "Any Wife," James Lee's wife, and Elvire for evolving from the married relationship its utmost possibilities for mutual devotion might be called the desire for exclusive possession on the spiritual plane; and so corresponding with the desire of the husbands of "My Last Duchess," "The Flight of the Duchess," "The Statue and the Bust," for getting out of the relationship all it was selfishly worth to them, which might be called the desire for exclusive possession on the physical plane.

Is Beatrice Signorini to be classed with this group of wives? Or in what respects does her idea of the relationship and its possibilities differ from theirs? Is Francesco's relationship with her the highest possible for him? What does Browning's way of telling of his attraction for Artemisia intimate as to the possibility for a relationship which would conduce to Romanelli's higher development were he capable of fitly responding?

Does the husband of "Bad Dreams" in his suspiciousness and exactions belong with the husbands who are disposed to consider the married relationship as a field for impressing their will upon others? Compare his ideas of marriage with those of the husband in George Meredith's "Modern Love," as examples of the survival of dominating egotism mixed with the refinement of a modern husband of more than ordinary sensibility.

The husband of "A Forgiveness" is especially interesting because he presents an apparent contradiction. He seems to have high ideas at first of the possibilities of the relationship between himself and his wife, to scorn jealousy of the vulgar sort, and to have the purest grief awakened when he discovers his wife's disloyalty. But later, his coldness and disdain, his refined cruelty of silence and of vengeance, finally, when he learns that her error was due to misguided love for him, show him to be in his different way as bent upon asserting his prerogatives as the Duke of Ferrara.

Is it a token of the desire for spiritual ascendancy which the wife of "By the Fireside" has and the wife of "Any Wife to Any Husband" wants to have, that the wife of 'A Forgiveness' is hungry for

greater love and a more spiritual power over her husband, and seeks to arouse his physical passions from the intellectual control to which they are subject? In so doing she, as it were, divides the physical and spiritual elements of her love, feeding thus a jealous reaction, amounting almost to hatred, against the love that seemed to her too superior and self-contained to be love. Show the similar lack of balance on his part in the sequel. Did he not criticise her love also, and turn judge and executioner because it was not what he would have it? Did either develop a higher phase of love in the course of the poem?

What should you say was the idea of their married relationship held by Elvire's husband; and what that of its possibilities? Do the two disagree somewhat, his idea of their relationship being that he holds a similar right to that the Duke of Ferrara claimed,—to get out of that, and all other relations beside, what he wanted; while his ideas of the possibilities of the relationship are almost as exalted as those of the husband of "By the Fireside."

*Queries for Discussion.*—What should you say was the basic difficulty in the relations between the unhappy or semi-happy pairs portrayed in this series of poems and what the firmer ground of union in "By the Fireside"?

Shakespeare makes Iago say that love is "a permission of the blood." He writes in his "Sonnets" (cxvi.) that it is "an ever-fixed mark," "the star to every wandering bark," "Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks within his bending sickle's compass come." By which criterion will the relationships in these poems best be judged, and which will be accounted as having the highest possibilities?

Is it due to the increasing importance in these poems of the woman as an active and intellectual power in the relationship, instead of a passive and merely physical element, that the type of love represented in "By the Fireside" is the highest? If the wives in some of these poems be considered to desire to exercise a sort of spiritual despotism, can it be said of this that it is a benevolent despotism tending toward the development of the higher values of the relationship, while the physical despotism exercised in fact by certain of the husbands is crushing to any life or happiness? But would it be better still to have no despotism even of a benevolent variety in the relationship?

Does "By the Fireside" show the highest capability of the related power and characters of the husband and the wife because the physical and spiritual elements of love are fused?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— The Artistic Intention.

*Hints:* — What do these poems reveal of the poet's design and of the means used to attain it?

The first two poems are framed to express a significant personal mood; the second, as its title shows, being intended also to be somewhat more than personal, to be typical of the wifely attitude. The title, "By the Fireside," also reveals design. With its implications of the close of the year, of cold and darkness, it suggests the right atmosphere for this poem of anticipated old age. Use is intentionally made, too, of autumn's "pleasant hue," its woodland fruits, and crimson-splashed leafage to symbolize happy old age. Notice all such symbols. Point out the adaptation to the theme of the imagery of the book, the



youngsters, the branch-work vista. The figure as to the "branch-work" is doubtless suggested by the foregoing fancy of the youngsters going to the hazel wood. Observe that he speaks in stanza v. of the outside frame of the branch-work as like the hazel-trees, the inside as less material and external, — "a rarer sort" pertaining to the world of mind. Notice the metaphoric reference to Italy in stanza vi. Is it a happy figure to use in a poem written in memory and praise of a wife? The imagery employed in the nature descriptions is of what kinds? The mill or iron forge that "breaks solitude in vain" (line 35) is humanistic, one may say, in its implication, this building with human interest being likened to a little interruption of nature's large stillness; the "thread of water," all that finds its way through the obstruction the torrent has piled in its own course (line 40), and the "silver spear-heads" (44) are figures borrowed from the similar look of material objects. But the simile of the small ferns' teeth (50) is both humanistic in its source and objectively graphic in effect. Notice the humanistic image in stanza xxxii. and so on. Are any of the figures used in the passage in the poem describing the natural beauty of the Italian scene especially adapted to the larger symbolism of the poem, like the first references to the season of the year as corresponding to life's November, etc.? The small bird (151) that sings except at noonday, when a pair of hawks threaten it, seems to signify more than usual. What does it suggest of the danger to love's song in the high noon of life? Compare with the hawk that stalks on the bough where the birds are quarrelling, in "A Woman's Last Word" (lines 5-11). Observe, also, the tree with its one



last leaf hanging, to which he likens his sleeping heart (lines 201-215). Is this symbolic, — a pictorial allusion fleetingly suggestive of a subtle feeling, but not to be tracked out in literal detail; or is it as elaborately allegorical as Mr. Nettleship makes it in the following curious passage: "I, in that early autumn time of my brain, stood there like an old wood-god worshipping a nymph changed to a tree. . . . I knew there was no chance for me to gain any token of love from that tree with its one precious leaf, by any act of my own. . . . I was not in that summer prime when I could take by force of brain what gifts I would. But the tree was good to me. At the slight wind of my unexpressed mad longing, it unfastened its leaf. . . . In that moment you fulfilled my hope."

Is stanza lii. a part of this husband's reminiscences, or is it written from his present standpoint, while his wife is still sitting opposite to him and before the anticipated autumn comes? Does the recurrence in the last stanza to ideas expressed in the opening stanza repeat it needlessly, or serve intentionally to set the poem in the frame of a plan carrying out the thought?

The metre in which the poet makes the man express himself is a four-stressed line, generally iambic, grouped in stanzas of five verses alternately rhyming; the fifth line is shorter, with but three stresses, rhyming with the initial rhyme, and closing the stanza perceptibly to the ear.

The longer five-stressed line of the second poem lends to the ardent tone of "Any Wife" a much more melancholy cadence. In comparison the verse of "By the Fireside," although pensive, almost dreamy, is both cheerier and less suppressed. Notice the

different stanza and rhyme scheme ; how infrequently the stress falls on the first instead of the second syllable of the foot compared with the foregoing poem ; how much simpler the imagery is. Is it less humanistic, but more complete in its similarity to the idea ? Especially observe the obvious fitness of the tomb metaphor (lines 103-114) and the perfect beauty of it in all its adaptation to the mood expressed.

Does this difference in the range of the imagery between the two poems serve the purpose of portraying the personality of the two distinct sorts of poetic mind here finding dramatic expression, — the one tending to be both more fleetingly allusive and humanistic in its fancies, like Robert Browning ; the other more purely lyric, subjective, and spontaneous, like Elizabeth Barrett Browning ?

The three following poems are contrived so as to bring out personality chiefly, also ; but to do this in a much more complex way, and in a way both dramatically and metrically suited to the spokesman in the first two, and to the general air of a Florentine legend in the third of the stories. They each depict more persons than one, and these not subjectively nor by allusion merely, as in the foregoing poems, but objectively in relationship with others and amid various surroundings both of a concrete and a historic sort.

For example, show how the fresco-painted, bronze-adorned palace-hall at Ferrara makes the right background for the Duke's tell-tale talk with the Count's envoy ; and how the flowing, rarely end-stopped, five-stressed verse, couplet-rhyming yet never noticeably obtruding the rhyme, seems to be in general accord with the manner of such a spokesman as the one through whose eyes this bit of life is seen.

The whole country, with its occupants of diverse callings and customs, the castle, household, stable, etc., stand behind the second poem. Several different sets of social relationship — such as those between the Kaiser, the Duke and his huntsmen, the rude Northland, sophisticated Paris, and free gipsy life — add their larger semi-feudal environment to the story. And the medium through which it is all set forth — the rough yet ready, couplet, triplet, and alternate rhymed, often perilously double and obtrusively rhymed verse, racy with hunting terms, and imagery of a homely out-doors kind — is adapted to suit the tongue of the keen-eyed gamekeeper who helps the Duchess to escape, and whose kind heart is susceptible enough to be impressed with the gipsy incantation song, so that he could record it faithfully as he does, in a sustained, singing, smooth and simple rhymed line, strongly contrasting in all other respects, except that the line is also four-stressed, with his own speech. Collect examples of the hunting terms, the allusions to active life, the proverbial expressions and the references, when they are of a literary sort, to familiar folk stories, such as Orson and Esau. Are there any allusions that do not suit the spokesman? Study the effect of the rhymes, and the contrast with the Gipsy's song. (See *Poet-lore*, "Rhymes in Browning," Vol. II., Sept. 1890, pp. 480-486.)

Is the terza-rima of "The Statue and the Bust" an appropriate metre for that Florentine legend? Why? What allusions and similes (see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IV., p. 397) are there in this poem; and can you trace any choice in them? Does even the imagery of the conclusion — which is separable from the legend itself, as the townsmen tell it — suit

the Italian setting? Notice the "soldier-saints" of line 222, and "the very Guelph," 234, and show their pertinence.

These poems so far considered reveal artistic intention in their imagery and metrical structure, as well as in the manipulation of the subject matter. Regarded as wholes, do they reveal artistic intention in broader ways? In all of these three poems the design of the poet to recreate the life and spirit of the Renaissance period in general, and in particular its crudities as to married life, may be studied with reference to the history of that important epoch which forms the threshold of modern civilization. (See *Camberwell Browning*, passages on these poems in Introduction, Vol. IV., pp. xiv and xv, for further general hints. As to Riccardi's imprisonment of his bride, and what the Duke's admiration of her might have meant for him, see "Browning's 'The Statue and the Bust,' a Parable," by Prentiss Cummings, *Poet-lore*, Vol. X., No. 3, pp. 397-416.)

In the second and third of these three poems, the intention to make them illustrate moral evolution is also revealed directly. In the first of this group, "My Last Duchess," moral intention is only revealed indirectly. There is no trace of artistic manipulation of the story to make it suggest an inner meaning. In the others what traces are there of a sort of moral symbolism? And how is this presented? Notice that this symbolism consists, in "The Flight of the Duchess," in drawing a contrast between a sapless, egotistical, and imitative manner of life, and one irradiated with the warmth and movement of love and freedom, so that the question is not, "Was the Duchess justified in running away with the Gipsy

Queen," but, rather, is the Duke's death in life compatible with any spiritual progress at all?

"The Statue and the Bust" has been accused of a didactic purpose instead of artistic moral symbolism. But in this poem, as in "The Flight of the Duchess," is the design which is revealed one that tends towards the illumination of a basic moral principle, and not one that directs one how to act in a given case? (See Mr. Cummings' "The Statue and the Bust," as cited above.)

Which of the remaining poems of this series reveal artistic intention, both historically and morally, as these two poems do?

"James Lee's Wife" shows artistic design in the way in which various details of its allusions suit the lyrical mood, such as the comparisons with the lake and swan, the dell and dove (Part I. lines 15-20), the ship rotting in port (Part II. 19-24), the water striped like a snake, the fig leaf like a hand (III. 3 and 10). Instance others. In this it is like the first two poems of this series. It shows also, like "By the Fireside," a larger and more complex use of metaphors to illustrate the situation and the subject as a whole. For example, the change of season as a symbol of change in love is the keynote of the poem. It is struck in the first two stanzas lightly; it reappears in Part III.; it deepens in significance, to denote the change in all things spiritual in Part VI. (51-80), and in Part VII. it is metamorphosed still further to symbolize the spiritual harvest of joy the earth gets out of change, and in Part VIII. to suggest the inner spiritual beauty, in contrast to external beauty, that may be got out of the use of life as it is, whether ideal and perfect or not. The metrical and scenic adaptation of

the different parts to express the different moods of the wife is manifold. (See reference to this in *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. V., Introduction, p. xxiii.)

"Bad Dreams" may be compared with this poem as having parts differently made, to suit the lyrical design in metre and metaphor. But is it as rich as "James Lee's Wife" in these respects? Ask if each part in both poems has a plan of its own; what it is, what differences may be observed in the number of stresses to the line, the stanza form, and the relation of the title of each part of "James Lee's Wife" to the imagery and the mood. Neither of these poems reveals either the historic or moral sort of artistic intention noticed in the preceding group.

There are few allusions in "A Forgiveness" to place its historic background definitely before us. The names of the maids (line 48), the allusion to Don Quixote (97) and to the order of the Golden Fleece, a Bourbon decoration peculiar to the Courts of Madrid and Vienna (195), warrant the acceptance of it, however, as a dramatic portrait of a husband and wife intended to be as typically Spanish, perhaps of the seventeenth century, as "My Last Duchess" is of Northern Italy in the age of the Despots. Like "My Last Duchess," it depicts the power a husband of rank exercised at pleasure or displeasure over his wife's life; and like it, also, it presents this tragic transcript of household manners in a completely colorless way, so far as moral intention is concerned; and this is done, as in the earlier poem, necessarily, because the incident and the characters are made known through the mouth of the husband himself. In his grim talk with the priest, the main intention is to show the inexorable pride of the Spanish statesman's personality,



whose softening towards his wife and the priest meant simply that, having come to feel less contempt for them, he did them the honor to hate and kill them in cruel ways, each artistically appropriate. Notice particularly the description in "A Forgiveness" of the "arms of Eastern workmanship" and its relation to the character of the main actor and his deed of vengeance. Do you feel any sympathy with this husband, and if so, why? Is it due to the poet that you feel any, and how? Are his dignity and his power of will to work, to restrain himself (notice especially lines 292-304) to attain his ends, qualities that most excite your respect for his character, or your sense of pathos that such a man should indulge in so desolate a vengeance? Are you "sad," the poet seems to ask, through this man's words (line 390), the subtlest sort of artistic indirection, "for whose sake hers, or mine, or his"? Is the verse metrically, and as to rhyme, the same as that of "My Last Duchess"? Study the monologue-form of "A Forgiveness" with a view to exhibiting the skill shown in revealing the characters of all the actors, so far as they relate to the incident given, through the mouth of a single speaker. Should you say that in "Fifine at the Fair" the artistic intention of the poet is richer and more complex than in any of the other poems of this series? Has it historic intention? To what time does it belong, judging by its allusions? Notice lines 528-535, 551, 706, 1107, 1588. Could these denote any other background than the nineteenth century? And would you place Elvire's husband himself, as he is brought out in point of view and character as well as culture, anywhere else than in modern times? May one not be sure that "Fifine at the Fair" will in



the next century or so as certainly betray the artistic intention of the poet to paint a distinctively modern husband contemporaneous with us of to-day as in "My Last Duchess" to paint a husband of the late Renaissance period?

Still another sort of artistic intention revealed through literature instead of history belongs to this poem. Its motto from Molière's "Don Juan" indicates that the poet's design in writing the poem was to take up the Don Juan theme in a way specially suited to meet the spiritual instead of the merely physical side of marriage generally brought forward. And this design is reinforced by the employment through allusion of the interpretation by Euripides of the great Greek marriage myth of Helen. (See, upon this literary evidence of artistic intention, passages in *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IX., pp. xv-xviii). There is in "Fifine," in accord with this, an idea rather symbolistically suggested, that wives typically are nearer spirit than flesh, and represent that side in the relationship and the aspiration toward the spiritual good of love, more purely than husbands do. Compare with "By the Fireside," "Any Wife to Any Husband," the Prologue and Epilogue to "Fifine," and in the "Parleying with Daniel Bartoli," the relations of the Duke and the druggist's daughter.

Do Elvire's brief remonstrances, as re-echoed by the husband, amount to anything, in showing the poet's moral intention in the poem? How otherwise is any glimpse of it to be had, since, as in "My Last Duchess" and "A Forgiveness," the husband himself is the mouthpiece? Does the poet make the apologist condemn himself? And does he take an artistic means to do this or not? In what way, after

all, could he be said to condemn himself? Is it of anything further than lack of development? In what way does the epilogue show the poet's predisposition towards constancy in married love as the fruit of life experience, and how does this agree with the idea of "By the Fireside" and "Any Wife to Any Husband"?

What examples are there in "Fifine" of easy colloquialisms, humor, irony, picturesque and beautiful description, etc.? Are any of these inappropriate to the character of the hero? How does the long six-stressed line suit his nimble mind? (As to metre, see *Camberwell Browning*, Introduction, p. xv.) Has the poem any metaphorical images that are prominently symbolical of its larger meanings? Observe the series of enlargements of the scene by similes seen in a dream, of the crowd in St. Mark's Square, of the carnival of the whole world, of the Druid Temple, etc. Also, especially the use of the swimming metaphor as used by the modern Don Juan, and as used by the poet in the prologue "Amphibian." Is the analogy of the butterfly to the "certain soul which early slipped its sheaf" a reference to Elizabeth Barrett Browning? And do you think his different drift in his employment of the same metaphor, using the unstable element, in swimming, so as to rival progress in the air, and likening his own disporting in poetry on earth to the best mimicry possible to him of her spiritual life in heaven, — is this designed to symbolize the continued companionship of the poet's love and life with that of his wife, to whom he dedicates his poem?

The manner of telling Beatrice Signorini's story differs how from this and most of the preceding

poems? Is it a lyrical expression of a single personality like the first two in the series? Is it a monologue? How many characters appear? How definite an idea of them do you get? Is their speech given directly, and does the poet's view come out also, and how far? Can this and "The Statue and the Bust" be said properly to be written like condensed novels or short stories in verse? Is the verse in metre and rhyme like the monologues of this series?

Is Artemisia one of Browning's best examples of the so-called "New Woman," and how does the poet's way of regarding her reveal his point of view toward genius in women?

*Queries for Discussion.* — What does "The Statue and the Bust" imply? Is this view, —

"Weakness of will in the case of the lovers in this poem wrecked their lives; for they were not strong enough to follow either duty or love." (*Camberwell Browning*, Introduction, Vol. IV., p. xv.) "The closing stanzas point the moral against the palsy of the will, whose strenuous exercise is life's main gift." (*Ibid.*, Notes, Digest, p. 397.) —

or is this view of the poet's moral intention warranted by the poem, —

"Prudence and conventionality . . . count for nothing with the poet. But conventionality counts . . . in our conduct of life. It may have been the 'crowning disaster to miss life' for the man and woman: if so, it was a sacrifice justly due to human society. The sacrifice and self-restraint . . . may have atoned for much that was defective in their lives." (*Browning Cyclopædia*, p. 579.)

Did Browning have any allegorical intention in "The Flight of the Duchess"?

Do you agree with this interpretation by Mrs. Owen of the London Browning Society as put by Dr. Berdoe: —

“The Duke represents our gross self; the retainer who tells the story represents the simple human nature that may either rise with the Duchess or sink with the Duke. The Duchess represents the soul, the highest part of our complex nature. The retainer aids the Duchess, or human nature aids the soul, to free itself from the coarse, low, earth-nature, the Duke. So that the ‘Flight of the Duchess’ is the supreme moment when the soul shakes off the bondage of self and finds its true freedom in others.”

If it is merely a romance, has it none the less an inner meaning of a general nature, and what should you say it was?

How is moral design justifiable in a work of art? Should it have none? How do artists exemplify this question in their work? Illustrate.

Should the artist make a distinction between an inorganic crystallization of his inner meaning and an implication of it more or less unmistakable which grows out of his work and agrees with its artistic structure? Is such a way of conveying moral intention an evidence of the highest artistic skill instead of the contrary? How has Browning done in these poems? Do his poems, whose artistic structure does not agree with conveying moral design, refrain from it; and in the poems which supply direct illustration of their inner meaning, does their artistic construction permit and suit it?

Does a comparison of these poems tend to show that it is a characteristic of Browning to make his imagery agree with his situations and subject-matter?

Do they show that he, more than most poets, puts his imagination into his characters so thoroughly that they rarely make allusions inconsistent with the point of view belonging to their time and character?

Elvire's husband says that "Man takes all and gives naught" in order to develop himself, while woman's part is to bestow all and be absorbed, "Women grow you," and "'t is only men completely formed, full-orbed, are fit to . . . illustrate the leader" ("Fifine," lxxi.-lxxiv.) ; Francesco Romanelli says of himself, "' Man — by nature I exceed woman the bounded . . . my portion is' — he chose to think — 'quite other than a woman's: I may drink at many waters . . . abler thereby, though impotent before'" ("Beatrice Signorini," 66-131). The comment on this last view, apparently by Browning, is to the effect that Francesco's desire was unjustifiable to make Artemisia's "germ of individual genius — what we term the very self," etc., "his own." Which is the truer view to take of the relations of men and women, — or which, if both are true to life as it is, is the one showing the higher development in life and thought? Compare also Browning's statement that it were "the better impulse," since he could not admit Artemisia's art and her "plain sufficiency of fact that she is she and I am I" (line 70), if he wisely trampled on pride and grew hers, "not mine . . . gain not her but lose myself." Upon this impulse, put aside by Francesco, the poet again comments: "Such love were true love: love that way who can! Some one that's born half woman, not whole man." Does this betray Browning's view of the right trend in the evolution of love?

## ART AND THE ARTIST

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I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* —  
The Subject-Matter and its Manner of Presentation.

*Hints:* — For abstracts of subject-matter of the poems, see Notes to *Camberwell Browning*, as given above.

For consideration as to treatment, these poems may be grouped as descriptive of pictures, — "The Guardian Angel," "Eurydice to Orpheus," "A Face." With these may be included "Deaf and Dumb," though the inspiration here is a group of statuary. "Pacchiarotto" is descriptive, being an account of an incident in an artist's life. The most important of the art poems, however, are in dramatic monologue form. All the remaining poems cited are in this form except the slight bit, "The Lady and the Painter," which is in drama form.

Taking up the simpler poems first, we may inquire into the poet's manner of translating a picture into words so that the reader may see it before him.

It is to be observed in "The Guardian Angel" that there is no direct description of the picture, but that in giving expression to the emotions and thoughts aroused, the picture gradually appears in all its details.

In stanza i., by means of the poet's address to the great angel and his expression of the desire that it would leave the child for him, we see that the picture is of an angel and child, and that the angel is ministering to the child. In the second stanza how much more of the picture do we see as the poet imagines how the angel might step out to him and guard him, as it does the child, — that the angel's wings are white, and that the child is praying on a tomb, also that the angel is looking toward heaven? In the third stanza what additional light is given upon the position of the child, and how does the thought of the poet here and in the next two stanzas transcend the picture? (See the picture given as frontispiece to Vol. IV., *Camberwell Browning*.) In stanza vi. he turns from the picture to a friend, Alfred, and addresses him, mentioning the artist, and giving another glimpse of the picture. Does this glimpse add any fresh details? In stanza vii. he tells his friend how he and his own angel (his wife) used to go and see the picture, and what reason does he now give for having written the poem, and for whom does it appear he wrote it? The last three stanzas give the poem almost the effect of a letter. Do you not think that the artistic effect of the poem is somewhat marred by this personal touch at the end?

In "Eurydice to Orpheus" there is no description



of the picture, only the interpretation of the soul of Eurydice as the poet reads it in her face. Would the poem convey a definite impression without any knowledge of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice?

In "Deaf and Dumb," again, the group is not described in detail, but through the thought it inspires in the poet we feel rather than see its beauty.

"A Face" describes in more complete detail a picture after the manner of the early Tuscan art which has been suggested by the beauty of the face. Notice that this differs from the other poems in that it reflects a mood of admiration for exquisite physical beauty, while the others breathe of spiritual beauty, and, as already noted in the case of "The Guardian Angel," the emotions aroused by the picture in the poet make the principal motif of the poem. (For other picture-painting in words in Browning, see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. I., "Pauline," lines 656-667, Notes, p. 308; Vol. VIII., "Balaustion's Adventure," lines 2672-2697, Notes, p. 299.)

"Pacchiarotto" is in the form of a simple narrative told in the poet's own person; but some complexity is introduced through the fact that the story is not told for its own sake, but for the sake of a personal digression on the part of the poet, in which he points a moral against his own critics. (For further discussion of this poem, see Programme "The Autobiographical Poems.")

Among those art poems which we have designated as dramatic monologues, there is considerable variation of treatment. "Old Pictures in Florence," for example, being evidently an expression of the poet's own thoughts, might more properly be called a soliloquy than a dramatic monologue, yet the style is so

conversational, the poet frequently breaking out in direct address to some old artist-worthy or some dull critic, that the effect is thoroughly lively and dramatic.

Having become familiar with the subject-matter of the monologues by aid of the notes, it is interesting to inquire into the details of its presentation. In "Old Pictures in Florence," the poet gives first (stanzas i. and ii.) a general description of the scene that meets his gaze as he looks out over the villa-gate, until his attention is especially attracted by what? Can you guess why Giotto's tower startled him? Perhaps because it suggests to him vivid thoughts concerning art and artists, out of which grow conceptions of the place the Campanile holds in the development of art; or else because it suddenly reminds him, as he playfully pretends, of a special claim he has on the recognition of artist-ghosts which it stings him to the heart to feel that they have disregarded. This special claim seems to be that he is guiltless of the carelessness which the world in general shows to the tentative work of all artists and all stages of art. From the especial apostrophe to Giotto which the sight of the bell-tower calls out, in stanza iv. he falls into reminiscences of what he had done on winter afternoons, in the course of which he draws contrasts between the things that interest the men of Florence and that interest him, — the old pictures. The neglect of these next brings to his mind the fame of the Rafaels, etc., and he pictures what their state of mind may be in comparison with the "wronged great souls," which causes him to wax indignant at those "of the little wit" who cannot appreciate these early artists, and results in his giving them instruction. What does he declare to be the

characteristics of Greek art? Observe the graphic way in which he describes Greek art as presenting ideals of beauty and power to mankind which they aspired toward but could not attain unto. What did they learn from this constant consciousness of their own weakness compared with the strength of Greek art? Does the poet appear to consider the lesson learnt a good one?

Continuing stanza xv. with his "instructions," what does he declare to be the very essence of growth, and how did the early Italian painters discover this and illustrate in their works this new attitude toward life? In stanza xx. he turns from instructing to exhorting the unappreciative to give honor to those pioneer artists who began the great revolution. Here the poet has a beautiful fancy as to the future life; what is it? and how does his mood change in the next stanza? In xxiii. he enlarges upon his own love of these early artists, and goes on to what he calls his especial grievance. Here (xxiv.) follows a humorous description of the ghosts of the early painters watching the whitewashing, etc. of their pictures, then departing down the black streets; and the poet declares himself aggrieved that they never reveal to him any of the lost treasures they must know about. Then he goes on to particularize those from whom he would expect nothing and those he thinks might remember him, leading up finally to Giotto, against whom it now appears is his special grievance, as was hinted in stanza iii. Describe what this grievance is and what he declares will be the final upshot. In anticipative gratitude at this result he takes up a strain of prophecy which continues to the end of the poem. What is this prophecy?

In "Pictor Ignotus" we have a true dramatic monologue, though not at all a complex one, for it portrays but one character, the unknown painter, who, after breaking forth with straightforward directness in regard to his having been able to paint as well as the youth all are praising, goes on to explain how he had not been hindered by fate, why? Because he had the inspiration in his soul, observation equally penetrating for the mysteries of heaven, of his own soul, and of life around him; and moreover the mechanical skill to put into form his thoughts. Observe with what exquisite language he now describes the emotions and passions he might have portrayed. In line 23 he doubts for a moment whether he has not wasted his powers. How does this feeling change in the next line? From the ecstasy he feels in the thought of the pictures he might have painted, he passes on to the thought of the happiness it would have been to have had these pictures loved and himself loved because of them. He wakes now from these ecstasies to tell why he could not follow his artistic inspiration, and had thus made his choice as he willed. Notice that only through description of the feelings he has as he works, do we learn for the first time what that work really was.

Does this poem resemble "The Guardian Angel" in that its living principle is the moods and emotions of the artist, and the facts we learn in this case as to his talent, his character, and the conditions of his life, do not come out by means of any direct description, but as the necessary expression of his moods?

"Fra Lippi Lippo" is an example of a more complex monologue. Observe how through Lippo's talk we get a complete picture, not only of Lippo

himself, but of the functionaries who are detaining him, of the successive actions in the scene, and of the time and place where it is being enacted. Reading through line 44, what do you learn of him? What do you learn of the looks of his detainers, and of their actions? After he has picked out the one he sees to be most friendly, he proceeds to tell him how he comes to be wandering about the streets so late at night. What effect does his story have upon his friend? (See line 76.)

Since the friendly individual's sympathy is not wholly aroused by this tale, and he is inclined to question how it is that a monk should enjoy such escapades, the clever Lippo goes on to give an account of his childhood and the way he came to be a monk. Note Lippo's wit and humor as he tells this story. "What came next?" we may imagine his friend to inquire. To which he replied by telling of the difficulties that beset the monks in discovering what he was fit for. How did he show them what his natural bent was, and how does he say his observation as a child was sharpened? The monks would have turned him adrift for his artistic propensities, but what does the Prior say? When Lippo is allowed to give rein to his talent, how and what does he describe himself as painting? And how did the monks regard it? But what do the Prior and the learned say about his art? To their criticisms what does Lippo retort? Having given this account of himself, he goes on (line 223) to apologize a little for himself. How? And then to tell how in spite of the fact that he is his own master now, the early criticisms still have their effect upon him. Is his question about whether they with their

Latin know, sarcastic, or the expression of a dormant reverence for the opinion of those who are learned?

The result of this conflict in his nature between his natural bent and its suppression by criticism is, as he goes on to say, what? Observe how, in the lines following this up to line 269, he forgets all restraint and gives vent to his unvarnished opinion of those who criticise the realism of his work. At this point he grows stronger in his own opinion, and prophesies that such work as his will be the work of the future. Who has he already as a pupil? Then he appeals to his friend to judge for himself as to whether his view of life and art is not higher than the old one. What supposed objections does he meet? and what are the main points in his argument? Observe how he works up to a climax of feeling which shows that to the soul of Lippo beauty, natural and physical, was in itself a divine revelation. He finishes with another outbreak against the "fools," and suddenly remembering himself, he grows humble and apologetic again, and promises to make amends. What does he say he will do to make amends, and how does he characteristically describe the picture which will make things all right with the Church again? It is evident that his arguments finally convinced his friend among the guard who "nabbed" him, for he goes off home in the early morning light.

Is this long talk of Lippo's rendered natural through the fact that he and one of the guards took a fancy to each other? Can we suppose that his listener appreciated all his remarks, or that he was simply taken with his manner and personality?

In "Andrea del Sarto" the presentation is in the



same manner as in "Fra Lippo Lippi." The reader is immediately brought face to face with the hero of the poem. He is speaking, and in the course of his talk we see not only him but his wife, learn the sort of relation that exists between them, and get a glimpse of their past life.

What is the time and the scene, and what is he promising his wife he will do to-morrow? But what does he desire to do at that moment? As he looks at her, he sees in his mind's eye a picture of themselves; how does he describe it? From this he turns to a comparison of his own style and capabilities as an artist with those of other celebrated painters. Give the gist of what he says.

Overwhelmed here by the sense of his own lack, he gently upbraids his wife for not having been more of an inspiration to him. Does he feel quite sure that if she had been different he would have succeeded better? Or does he seem to think that his life has been ruled by a sort of divine fate? Or has he some suspicion that his own lack of will-power is responsible for it? (See line 139.) His conclusion that God will reward or punish in the end, brings to his mind the fact that it will be safer if he is not too much rewarded in this world, and he falls into a reminiscence of his past life. What comes out in regard to his life to explain his feeling that it will be safer if he does not get too much award here? He comes back to the present (line 175), and comparing Rafael's picture of the Virgin with his own for which his wife sat, imagines what men might say of these two pictures. This puts him in mind of another reminiscence about himself. What was it? At the thought of this praise he ventures to grasp the chalk and correct the



arm in a picture of Rafael's. He had in his room a copy (see line 106). Why only does he care for the praise?

We come now to the closing scene, — the wife smiling because she hears the cousin's whistle; Andrea going on talking, so filled with his own thoughts that he thinks the smile for him, and feeling a little encouraged, asking her to come inside. Then he realizes the cousin has been calling. He recurs to his request made at the beginning of the poem, and repeats his promise: and what does he declare will be the best thing about the money he is to receive? Describe his final mood, his apology for his own sin, his vision of what he might do in heaven, and the recurring certainty that he would be "overcome" because of his wife, Lucrezia, and, finally, the triumph of his love over every other thought in the words "as I choose," and of his unselfishness in his bidding her go to her cousin.

Observe how, by indirections as it were, the wife's personality is clearly presented (see lines 4, 20-33, 38, 54-56, 74-75, 117-132, 166, 199-202, 219-223, 228, 241-243). Is Andrea more completely under one influence than Fra Lippo?

In "The Bishop Orders his Tomb," we have a connoisseur in art instead of an artist. As a monologue, this is not quite so complex as the preceding one, because it is almost entirely a revelation of the Bishop's own character, the "nephews" whom he addresses not appearing as very strong personalities unless the old Bishop's fear that they would not execute his orders be taken as an index of their character. Besides the Bishop's character, however, we learn something of the incidents of his life. What are these? We get, furthermore, a vivid picture of the splendor of

his tomb. Describe it. Observe all through the poem how subtly is portrayed in the Bishop the combination of human nature with its passions and hates and envies, and his churchly training that breaks out in pious exclamations from time to time; also the jumble of Greek and Christian art he wishes to have in his tomb. In his ideal of his future enjoyment when he is dead (see line 80 and fol.), do his pagan or his churchly instincts conquer? Do you feel at the end that he is not going to get his tomb, or that he is, through a life of suspiciousness, afraid his "nephews" will not carry out his orders in spite of all he offers them?

"The Lady and the Painter" is a very simple poem cast in dialogue form to point a moral which is evidently the poet's own opinion. What is this opinion?

*Queries for Discussion.* — Is the manner of presentation in each case especially suited to the subject in hand?

Are all these monologues dramatic, in the sense that they show movement in events? If they do not show movement in events, in what does their dramatic quality consist?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Sources and Allusions in relation to Subject-Matter.

*Hints:* — The poems in this group show a variety in the nature of the sources as well as a variety in the manner of treatment. Pictures in two cases were the sole source of inspiration, in another a group of statuary. In these instances the source is so intimately connected with the subject-matter, that in giving the manner of presentation, as in the preceding topic, all

is said about the sources and their relation to the poems that need be said. The remainder of the poems may be classified, broadly speaking, as deriving their subject-matter from biographical sources, — namely, “Fra Lippo Lippi,” “Andrea del Sarto,” “Pacchiarotto;” from an artistic emotion, in “Old Pictures,” “The Lady and the Painter,” and “Face;” from historico-artistic conditions, in “Pictor Ignotus” and “The Bishop Orders his Tomb.” The direct biographical source of “Fra Lippo Lippi” is found in Vasari’s “Lives of the Italian Painters.” As an example of how closely the poet modelled his facts upon those taken from Vasari, we may make the following comparisons (drawn from the Notes, “Select Poems of Browning,” published by T. Y. Crowell & Co.), “The Carmelite Monk, Fra Filippo di Tommaso Lippi, was born in a bye street . . . behind the convent.” See the poem, line 7. “Cosimo de Medici, wishing him to execute a work in his own palace, shut him up, that he might not waste his time in running about; but having endured this confinement for two days he made ropes with the sheets of his bed . . . let himself down from the window . . . and for several days gave himself up to his amusements.” See poem, lines 15, 47. “By the death of his father he was left a friendless orphan at the age of two years . . . for some time under the care of Mona Lapaccia, his aunt, who brought him up with very great difficulty till his eighth year, when being no longer able to support the burden, she placed him in the convent of the Carmelites. . . . Placed with others under the care of a master to . . . see what could be done with him; in place of studying he never did anything but daub his books with caricatures, whereupon the prior deter-

mined to give him . . . opportunity for learning to draw. The chapel, then newly painted by Masaccio . . . he frequented, and practising there — surpassed all the others . . . while still very young painted a picture in the cloister . . . with others in fresco . . . among these “John the Baptist.” See the poem, lines 81, 129, 136, 196. “For the nuns of Sant’ Ambrogio he painted a most beautiful picture.” See the poem, line 345. Vasari says that by means of this picture he became known to Cosimo. Observe that this does not agree with the poem, as in that Lippo is already known to Cosimo when he promises to paint the picture of the coronation of the Virgin. It appears that the poet is right here, and Vasari wrong. See notes to edition of Vasari cited below. Do you observe any other inaccuracies in the mere facts? From these extracts it may be perceived that Browning has turned a very dry record of events into a living reality, and how has he done this? By so seeing into the heart and impulses of the man that he re-creates his personality and enables us to see life as it was seen by Lippo? (For further study of the life of “Lippo,” see Mrs. Jameson’s “Early Italian Painters,” also Vasari’s “Lives,” edited by E. H. & E. W. Blashfield and A. A. Hopkins, Chas. Scribner’s Sons, N. Y.) Is there any incident of Lippo’s life which might have suggested to him the incident in the poem of the “little lily thing” that encouraged him? See lines 370–387.

Give an account of the allusions in the poem (see *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, Vol. V., p. 287), and show how they all grow naturally out of the subject-matter, that is, they do not come under the head of embellishments. Even the flower-songs, though they

add greatly to the beauty of the poem, come perfectly naturally from the lips of Fra Lippo. (For further information as to these songs, see *Poet-love*, Vol. II., p. 262, or Miss Alma Strettel's "Spanish and Italian Folk-Songs.")

Vasari's "Lives" furnished the source for the characterization of "Andrea del Sarto" also. In this case, however, there is the added source of the picture of Andrea and his wife, which really forms the scene-setting and tone of the poem. (See Notes, *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. V., p. 289.)

As in the case of "Lippo," extracts may be made from Vasari showing the facts that Browning transmuted from dry bones into living realities. For example: "He destroyed his own peace and estranged his friends by marrying Lucrezia di Baccio del Fede, a cap-maker's widow who ensnared him before her husband's death, and who delighted in trapping the hearts of men . . . he soon became jealous and found that he had fallen into the hands of an artful woman who made him do as she pleased in all things . . . but although Andrea lived in torment he yet accounted it a high pleasure." See poem, line 1 fol. "Art and nature combined to show all that may be done in painting when design, coloring, and invention unite in the same person. Had this master possessed a somewhat bolder and more elevated mind . . . he would have been without an equal. But there was a certain timidity of mind, a sort of diffidence and want of force in his nature, which rendered it impossible that . . . ardor and animation, which are proper to the more exalted character should ever appear in him. . . . His figures are well drawn . . . free from errors . . . the coloring exquisite." See

poem, lines 60, 82, fol. "Andrea understood the management of light and shade most perfectly, causing the objects depicted to take their due degree of prominence or to retire within the shadows." See poem, line 98. "If he had remained in Rome when he went thither to see the works of Raffaello and Michelagnolo . . . would eventually have attained the power of imparting a more elevated character and increased force to his figures . . . nay, there are not wanting those who affirm he would . . . have surpassed all the artists of his time . . . Raffaello and other young artists whom he perceived to possess great power . . . deprived Andrea, timid as he was, of courage to make trial of himself." See poem, line 76 fol. "Two pictures he had sent into France, obtaining much admiration from King Francis . . . that monarch was told he might prevail upon Andrea to visit France . . . the King therefore gave orders that a sum of money should be paid to Andrea for the expenses of the journey . . . his arrival was marked by proofs of liberality and courtesy . . . his labors rendering him so acceptable to the King and the whole court, his departure from his native country appeared . . . to have conducted him from wretchedness to felicity . . . But one day . . . came to him certain letters from Florence written to him by his wife . . . with bitter complaints . . . Moved by all this he resolved to resume his chain . . . Taking the money which the King confided to him for the purchase of pictures and statues . . . he set off . . . having sworn on the gospels to return in a few months. Arrived in Florence, he lived joyously with his wife for some time, making presents to her father and sisters, but doing nothing for his



own parents, who died in poverty and misery. When the period specified by the King had come . . . he found himself at the end not only of his own money but . . . of that of the King . . . remained in Florence, therefore, procuring a livelihood as he best might." See poem, line 149, fol. Though not bearing on the poem in any way, it will be found interesting to read in the notes to the edition of Vasari already mentioned of the attempts which have been made to prove that the story of Andrea's embezzlement was false. In fact, the statement rests entirely upon Vasari's authority, and excellent reasons have been adduced to show that he might easily have been mistaken.

Observe with what sympathetic insight Browning has looked at the miserable record of this man, and how he has emphasized whatever of nobleness there was in his character, making not the least noble thing about him his devotion to his wife, whom he was fated to love, whatever her faults might be.

Are the allusions in this poem related to the subject-matter in the same way as those in "Fra Lippo Lippi"? (For allusions, see *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, Vol. V., p. 289.)

The story told in "Pacchiarotto" is also derived from Vasari, and is to be found in the commentary of the Florence edition of his "Lives" printed in 1855. As an example of the way the poet has used his source in this poem, a few citations may be given:

"Among the principal and most ardent of the Bardotti was our Giacomo, whose head was so turned by the whims and vagaries of the State, that among many of his foolish pranks, it is related, that in a room of his house which was situated on the Via



Laterino, he had painted many faces, so that, standing in the midst of them, he appeared to be holding a long discussion, as if they in turn replied, and as their lord revered and honored him.

This is expanded into the account which runs through seven stanzas (see v.—xi.) besides being led up to by the four preceding stanzas. Point out the amplifications Browning has made upon this hint.

“During the exile of Fabio and the murder of Alessandro Bichi, a new sect of people sprung up in Siena, who from their open avowals of lawless principles were called the Libertines. These, having become arrogant, on account of success having been on their side in every faction against the tyrants of the city, as they called them, and even against foreign enemies, these Libertines therefore meddled with every important scheme of the Republic, and tried to gain all the honors and high offices for themselves. . . . They called upon the common people to aid them, making many promises to help them in return, which was the occasion that the common people and artisans of lowest extraction were turned aside from their daily life, and their time occupied in attending meetings where they listened to incendiary language against the affairs of the State. . . . Out of these meetings sprung the Congregation or Academy called the Bardotti, a name which really had no other significance than that which they chose to give it: an easy life at the public expense.” Compare this with stanzas xiii. and xiv.

“The Bardotti, believing circumstances to be of bad augury for them, had recourse to the aid and counsels of a few citizens who formerly had favored them; but receiving from them only reproofs for their

misdeeds, and no promises to protect them from justice, and terrified by their impending fate, they fled and hid themselves. Il Pacchiarotto, likewise, seized with great terror, wandered about like one demented throughout the city, thinking the sheriff was always dogging his footsteps in order to seize him and take him to prison. Finally he went into the parish church of San Giovanni, and saw a tomb where but recently had been covered a dead body ; he pushed it aside, and fixed himself there as best he could, and covered the tomb over with the stone. Here he remained in intense suffering of mind and body during two days, at the end of which time, half dead with hunger and the insupportable stench of the corpse, and covered with vermin, he fled through one of the gates of the city, which leads to the house of refuge of the brothers of the Observance. Il Pacchiarotto, when he thought the storm had passed, quietly returned to Siena, and, having been made aware by bitter experience what his follies had cost him, he resolved to apply himself to his work and no longer meddle with the affairs of State."

Compare this with stanzas xvi.—xx. See also xxiii. At stanza xx. the poet declares he is going to let his fancy have rein in the admonishment of the Abbot. What is this admonishment, and how does the poet make Pacchiarotto reply ? Does this poem lose in artistic force because of the fact that the incident is told and enlarged upon, simply to furnish a text for a philippic against critics ? This poem has a great many allusions, for explanation of which see *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, Vol. IX., p. 294. Point out how they are related to the subject-matter.

In "Old Pictures in Florence" the direct source

might be said to be the incident of the poet's missing an art treasure which fell into some one else's hands. However, this is, in reality, only a sort of stage fixture throwing a side light of humor over the whole poem, the true source being the poet's own artistic enthusiasm for the works of the old painters, and out of this grow his appreciations and his criticisms. Would the poem have been any stronger as a criticism of art if he had not toned it to this humorous incident? Does this incident, on the other hand, give the poem an artistic value it might not otherwise have by making the thoughts that cluster around it less didactic? Are they less didactic because they really grow out of an emotional mood rather than a critical one?

In "Face" the artistic appreciation of a beautiful face gives rise to the imaging of the face as it would look in a picture.

An emotion of indignation at those who wear bird's feathers in their hats and at those who object to the nude in art is the source of the dialogue, in "The Lady and the Painter," between an imaginary painter and an imaginary lady. Does it result in a very convincing argument either way?

In the two remaining poems, "Pictor Ignotus" and "The Bishop Orders his Tomb," the characters are imaginary, but they are set in an environment, and their personality is such that they belong to an especial historical epoch. The sources of such poems as these are in the knowledge of all the forces that go to the making of a certain period, — in this case, that of the Renaissance in Italy. The Bishop is the type of character that might be produced by the influences at work. What were these? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, Vol. V., 291, Introduction, p. xvi, fol.

For further information, see Ruskin's "Stones of Venice," Symonds's "The Italian Renaissance," and Vernon Lee's "Italian Studies.")

Observe how completely this Renaissance spirit is made to breathe forth through the character of one single man, and how completely the age dominates the personality of the man. Notice that the poem is headed "Rome, 15—" Did the Renaissance movement differ in any of its characteristics here from those in other Italian cities?

In "Pictor Ignotus" there is portrayed a personality as different from the Bishop's as could well be imagined. How does it happen that he, too, is a picture of the Renaissance? The same two influences are seen in him, are they not? — in his choosing to paint religious pictures and in his desire to paint life? But in this case the personality of the man is stronger than the age, and he deliberately chooses to suppress in himself the aspiration toward painting human life, not because he would consider it any less noble art, but because he reverences it so that he could not bear to subject it to just the sort of frivolous criticism that a bishop might give it. Whereas in the Bishop churchly traditions were but a matter of form, in the painter of "Pictor Ignotus" religion had entered into his very soul. (For further information, see books referred to above.) Give an account of all the allusions, and show in these latter poems how close the relation is between them and the subject-matter, and how many of them are introduced simply as embellishments to the language.

*Queries for Discussion.* — Is the poet justified in interpreting facts of history or biography to suit the needs of artistic presentation as he does in the poems

on Andrea and Lippo, for example? Upon this point Mr. Arthur Symonds has to say: "Whether the picture which suggested the poem is an authentic work of Andrea, or whether — as experts are now pretty well agreed — it is a work by an unknown artist representing an imaginary man and woman, is, of course, of no possible consequence in connection with the poem. Nor is it of any more importance that the Andrea of Vasari is in all probability not the real Andrea. Historic fact has nothing to do with poetry: it is mere material, the mere quarry of ideas; and the real truth of Mr. Browning's portrait of Andrea would no more be impugned by the establishment of Vasari's inaccuracy, than the real truth of Shakespeare's portrait of Macbeth by the proof of the untrustworthiness of Holinshed."

In which of these poems is the source most closely related to the subject-matter, and in which of them does the poet's imagination hold the largest place?

Along what different lines does the imagination work in these various poems?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— The Relations of Art to Character in Browning's Artist Portraits.

*Hints:* — The unknown painter of "Pictor Ignotus," Fra Lippo, Andrea del Sarto, and the Bishop of St. Praxed's step to the front upon the mention of Browning's artist portraits. We see at once that they represent four entirely different types of men. How would you describe their respective personalities as gathered from the poems? How is it made evident that the unknown artist was a man of transcendent genius? Besides this, he was a lover of humanity, was he not? How is this shown? Was he a lover

of humanity as it is, or rather as he thought it ought to be? Is there any touch of conceit in the desire that he should be loved on account of his pictures? Would you consider him a stronger character if he had done the best that was in him, regardless of how humanity might talk or act? Or do you feel that his sensitiveness in regard to the need of loving human appreciation and sympathy is a peculiarly refined aspect of his nature? Is it not a feeling natural to the great artist to revolt against the thought of the commercializing of his art? In speaking of this poem Mr. Symons says he "has dreamed of painting great pictures and winning great fame, but shrinks equally from the attempt and the reward: an attempt which he is too self-distrustful to make, a reward which he is too painfully discriminating to enjoy." Do you perceive anything in the poem to indicate that he was too "distrustful" of himself to make the attempt to paint? Does he not rather seem absolutely certain of his own powers? (line 2-3, "No bar stayed me," "Never did fate forbid me," etc.) The reason he did not make the attempt was because he so revered art and his own gift of art that he could not subject it to the gross atmosphere of daily, worldly life, and so he chose to imprison his genius in monotonous frescos for the church; why? Not certainly because he desired to serve God this way, but because these pictures would be safe from the rude intrusion of unsympathetic humanity. Does he seem to regret his decision, or is he satisfied that fame would have been a poor exchange for the consciousness he possesses of a genius preserved unsullied from the world? Compare him with Aprile in "Paracelsus," Part II., lines 420-487. Observe that Aprile would have liked to



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be translated to heaven when he finished his work, while this unknown painter wished to linger on earth. What is the difference in these two natures? Is it that one wished to give out love by means of his art, and the other wished to draw love to himself by means of his art? Which would be the more human, and which the more religious or aspiring attitude?

Has Fra Lippo any sensitiveness of nature? He is a lover of human life, like the unknown painter, but there is a difference. Is it that the unknown painter loves the soul,—the hopes, passions, aspirations of man,—while Lippo we discover to be an adorer of the physically beautiful? Are his arguments in favor of the beauty of the flesh convincing? Notice that while he emphasizes external beauty, he by no means ignores the soul; although he says, “if you get simple beauty and nought else you get about the best thing God invents,” in the same breath he says he never saw beauty with no soul at all. Yet the “soul” of beauty that Lippo sees is not quite the same as the soul the unknown painter sees, because one recognizes the divine essence of beauty, the other the divine essence of human aspiration or religion. Which of these do you think is the larger conception of soul, or does either of them include the other? Might there be a third attitude larger still which would include both?

While Lippo's nature is certainly not sensitive, does he not possess a certain amount of timidity through his early ecclesiastical training? How does this come out? Does his moral looseness come naturally from his artistic attitude? Does he give you the impression of being a bad man, that is, a man with design to do as much harm as possible, or an impul-



sive man, filled with the joy of mere physical existence, and unable to resist the pleasures of an occasional worldly frolic? In his revolt against the asceticism of the early Church, he naturally goes too far the other way. Are his theories of realism in advance of his practices in life? Observe that in spite of his realism he has an idealistic tendency, for he says we must beat nature. Is he right when he says, "We love first when we see them painted, things we have passed perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see"? Do you agree with him that beauty of form is necessary for the highest expression of soul? Do you agree with him that more of a spiritual uplift may be gained from the presentation of beautiful form than from pictures with an avowed didactic purpose? (See lines 317-335.)

"Andrea del Sarto" has neither the idealism of the unknown painter nor the joy in life of Lippo. He is depressed yet philosophical over the lack of power he feels in himself. How is this made evident? He points out just what his failures are, but are his complaints at all bitter? He has a vision of what he might have done had his wife given him true love and sympathy, but he seems to feel that such thoughts are vain, because it was she whom he perforce must love. It has been suggested that he could scarcely be justified in blaming his wife for his failures in life, for the fault was with him in pouring his affection upon so shallow and soulless a woman. But might it not be said, in reply to this, that love if genuine is given in spite of whatever faults the loved one may have?

Could any amount of love on his part justify his stealing in order to gratify Lucrezia's whims or his

looking over her flirtations with other men? Yet even in a New Jerusalem he cannot imagine himself painting without his passion for Lucrezia, and this he feels will drag him down, and he will always be surpassed by Leonardo, Rafael, and Agnolo, who have no wives. On the other hand, is not his love for Lucrezia the finest point in his character, its constancy, its effacement of self even to the point of sinning for her sake? The question is whether this is strength of love or weakness of character. Is there anything to be said of Lucrezia except that she is utterly detestable?

Does he give correct impressions of his own work? Are his criticisms of the other artists and his comparisons of his own work with theirs good? In the case both of Lippo and Andrea, has Browning conceived their personalities partly from the character of their paintings?

Do you feel sympathetic with Andrea as Browning has presented him, or disgusted with him? His love was so powerful a force in his character that his will was weakened. If the fates had decreed that he should love one whose sympathy would have strengthened his will, he might have accomplished that of which he dreamed, but after all is said, he seems to feel that his love is of more importance to him than anything else. Is this turn a characteristic one with Browning?

In contrast with these three, for all of whom we feel sympathy for one reason or another, the Bishop appears as an utterly unlovable old man. He loves art and even his church solely for the sake of the personal glory he can get out of it. Show how this is brought out.

A still worse feeling is his rivalry with old Gandolf,

and his desire to rouse his old enemy's everlasting envy with his tomb. Has he one single redeeming quality? (For further remarks on the Bishop, see Programme on "The Prelate.")

*Queries for Discussion.* — Is it shown in all of these poems that the man affects his art more than he is affected by it?

Which of these artists are portrayed with the most consistency? Do Lippo and Andrea branch out into abstract artistic principles not in keeping with their character?

If there are any such flights, is it not quite natural for human beings in their best moments of thought to express ideals far beyond their general practice?

IV. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Art Criticism in Browning's Art Poems.

*Hints:* — The art monologues may all be taken as illustrating different periods in the growth of art, while in two of them the speaker presents all there is to be said for his especial manifestation in art. In "Old Pictures in Florence" the early Christian artists receive directly from the poet their due share of appreciation, especially as contrasted with the Greek art. In "Fra Lippo Lippi" the realist in revolt against those very pioneer Christian artists is made to defend his ground and to show the idealism lurking in realism. Andrea, again, stands for formalism, his best defence being that the artists who are perfect in technique though lacking in inspiration at least do the best they can. Besides the defence of the early Christian artists in "Old Pictures in Florence," there is implied in the poem that all exponents and schools of art are related parts of the general scheme of man's growth. That the poet

is in sympathy with all schools is shown by his masterly presentation in these various poems of the claims of each. This artistic creed receives further exemplification in the "Parleyings," in that with "Gerard de Lairese," whose special characteristic was the embellishment of every-day nature with borrowed classical imaginings. (See *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, Vol. XII., p. 344.) Browning, in talking with Gerard, comes to the conclusion (see stanzas xiii. to end) that while art should go on to ever-fresh manifestations and should not try to resuscitate the past, yet past art manifestations are not to be thrown away, but preserved for their worth as the blossoming of past phases of growth. Professor Daniel Dorchester, writing of Browning's Philosophy of Art, says: "An art critic, intent only upon literal accuracy, would not accept the judgments expressed in these poems without many qualifications. He would cite, for example, the frescoes of Andrea del Sarto in the entrance court of Santa Annunciata in Florence, — their great dignity, their fresh passion and imagination, as evidence that Andrea was more than the clever realist Browning has described. Sandro, better known as Botticelli, is classified by Browning in his 'Old Pictures in Florence' with Giotto, Taddeo Gaddi, and Cimabue, but Botticelli was a pupil of Fra Lippo Lippi, who ushered in the next period of Italian art. Many such criticisms might be made, but they do not invalidate the truth of Browning's art poems. His principle of classification transcends such minor distinctions, and is concerned with the exemplification in art of certain types of character. Andrea del Sarto, it is true, occasionally rises to a great dignity of expression, but

the general level of his art was low, stereotyped, and sordid. Botticelli, though a pupil of Lippi, had a strong individuality, and belonged in spirit to the school of Giotto. Few painters have made every part of their work so tributary to an idea, or striven more earnestly after ideal beauty.

“In the poem, ‘Old Pictures in Florence,’ Browning shows that romantic art in its crude form is superior to Greek art in its perfection, simply because it manifests a higher ideal of the human soul. He is not unmindful of the glory of the Grecian character and art. The very atmosphere in which the Greeks lived was pellucid, and their thought was like it. They had, too, an intense love of sensuous beauty . . . so nurtured that it became their master passion. . . . The spirit of man for a time saw its ideal realized in the grand and beautiful forms of the Grecian divinities.

“But no sensuous representation, however excellent, could long seem an adequate expression to the developing soul of man.

“Spirit alone can satisfy spirit, and only in its own realm, the inner realm of the soul, can it find its true reality. In the decadence of Grecian art in proportion as there was a surrender to outer vision and as bodily charm was sought as an end, the human spirit turned its gaze inward and communed with its own loftier ideals. . . . Then Christianity came, insisting upon the Divine Spirit as the absolute ideal, and glorifying the soul at the expense of the body if need be.” This spiritual beauty “it was the mission of romantic art to reveal.” (Boston Browning Society Papers.)

Observe further that Lippo and Andrea represent two different but actual types of the artists of the

Renaissance, while "Pictor Ignotus" and the "Bishop" represent two imaginary types of Renaissance artists, neither of whom takes any active part in the development of art. Should you say that the former stood for the utmost idealism of this great movement, and the latter for its utmost grossness? (For studies of the Renaissance, see books cited above and "Renaissance Pictures in Robert Browning's Poetry," *Poet-lore*, Vol. X., pp. 66-76, Jan. 1898.)

By thus presenting these different types does Browning indicate more clearly than in any other way the complexity of this movement?

In "Pacchiarotto" we have a criticism of the art-critic rather than of art, and although the application is made to point at literary critics, the principle would apply just as well to art-critics, and this fundamental principle is that critics cannot make all artists conform to their notions of art any more than Pacchiarotto could reform the world and make everybody toe the mark according to his own notions,—in other words, that the true artist or genius always transcends the cut and dried rules of the critics. What corner of art criticism is touched upon in "The Lady and the Painter"? For further expression of opinion on this subject, see the "Parleyings," that with "Francis Furini," through stanza vii., also xi., line 557 to end.

*Queries for Discussion.* — Is Browning's theory that art should find its own new expression with every phase of life sound? Is it opposed to the generally accepted theory that there are definite standards in art?

Is Greek art so little expressive of aspiration as Browning seems to think in "Old Pictures in Florence"?

Might it be said that to-day we can get more of a



spiritual vision from Greek art by reading into its perfect form our own ideals, while in the early Christian art the poverty of form makes us see only the ascetic ideal of the early Christian?

V. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
—The Workmanship of the Poems.

*Hints:* — Notice the stanza-form of “The Guardian Angel.” It is made up of a quatrain, a couplet, and an extra line binding the stanza together by rhyming with the first and third of the quatrain. Do you observe any other point about the rhyming? How many accents are there to the line? Is the verse so regular that it may easily be scanned by feet? What is the metre, and are there any irregularities? Upon what does this poem depend chiefly for its music, — harmonious combinations of words, alliteration, smooth rhythm, or figures of speech?

Does the apparently careless cleverness of the rhymes and the familiar, personal, almost chatting tone of “Old Pictures” cheapen the dignity of its philosophy, or does it accord with the poet’s conception of the poem as a whole and add to its originality and effectiveness? How many accents are there to the line? and what is the rhyme-scheme? Are there any departures from the alternately rhyming lines of the opening stanzas, or any irregularities in the accents? Are there any rhymes you consider faulty or extravagant? If there are such to you, when taken separately, can you, upon study of the context and the air of the whole, show that they fall in well in their places as related to the rest of the poem? What figures are there in the poem? Examine the appropriateness of each to the design of the poem and to the sense, in its place.



“Pictor Ignotus” is made up of quatrains all joined together in one long paragraph. The effect of this is to make the verse flow continuously from beginning to end, without the usual breaks in the thought caused by the division into stanzas. What is the metre in this? Point out any variations you may perceive. There are many beautiful poetic figures in this poem; point them out, also the lines where alliteration occurs.

Notice that the difference in management of subject-matter between “Old Pictures” and “Andrea del Sarto” and “Fra Lippo Lippi” is matched by a corresponding difference in workmanship. Although a colloquial air is given the first poem by its easy pace and rhymes, “Fra Lippo” is decidedly more representative of easy talking, as it should be to convey its sense of dramatic dialogue and incident. How is this effect secured? Notice that it is in blank verse, not rhyme, and that its blank verse is facile, not stately. Is this effect produced by the character of the language and the shortness of the sentences? How does “Andrea del Sarto” differ? Is it more like “Old Pictures” or “Fra Lippo” as to its style of verse? How does it differ from both? How is the quieter style of Andrea effected? Is it suited to the subject-matter? Examine and explain the appropriateness of the figures.

Observe the difference in the atmosphere of “Lippo” and “Andrea,” — Lippo, sort of devil-may-care, breaking out every now and then into an Italian love-song.

Compare the blank verse of “The Bishop Orders his Tomb” with that of the other two blank-verse poems, and observe here the different atmosphere. Is

it due to any difference in the structure of the verse, or simply to the language put into the Bishop's mouth? Compare the different stanza forms of "Deaf and Dumb," "Eurydice to Orpheus," and "Face," pointing out their different rhyme schemes, their rhythms, and the character of the language, whether principally realistic or figurative. "Pacchiarotto" is a decided contrast with all the other poems, with its three-stressed lines and double and triple rhymes all through. Mr. Symons says of this poem: "The story is funny enough in itself, and it points an excellent moral; but it is chiefly interesting as a whimsical freak of verse, an extravaganza in staccato. The rhyming is of its kind simply perfect. . . . I think all other experiments of the kind, however successful as a whole, let you see now and then that the author has had a hard piece of work to keep up his appearance of ease. In 'Pacchiarotto,' there is no evidence of the strain." In the one remaining poem, "The Lady and the Painter," what are the verse characteristics?

*Queries for Discussion.* — Is blank verse better suited for the presentation of character than rhymed verse, because of the entire freedom it gives in the construction of sentences of any length? Has "Pictor Ignotus," in spite of its rhymes, something of the freedom of blank verse?

Do you find Browning's blank verse in these poems marked by much variation in the distribution of short syllables and of cæsural pauses?

## MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

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Compare David in "Saul," iv. 66, Notes, 375; lines 942-973 and 1566-1689 in "Fifine at the Fair," ix. 72, Notes, 288.

I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
 — The Material and its Modelling.

*Hints:* — A short account of the gist of each poem may be found in the Notes, *Camberwell Browning*, as given above.

Of this group of poems how many of them have to do with actual musicians? (See notes to the poems as given above. For further information, see Grove's "Dictionary of Music and Musicians;" also papers by Mrs. Alexander Ireland on "A Toccata of Galuppi's," by Miss Helen J. Ormerod on "Abt Vogler the Man" and "Andrea del Sarto and Abt Vogler," "Some Notes on Browning's Poems Referring to Music," by Mrs. Turnbull on "Abt Vogler." These are all suggestive papers, though full of inaccuracies on technical musical points which must be guarded against, and colored too much in their interpretations by the supposition that the

compositions in the poems must be regarded as beautiful specimens of musical art.)

It will be found that the relation of the musician to the poem he figures in varies considerably with the different poems. For instance, in "A Toccata of Galuppi's" it is a particular composition of this master that starts the train of thought; in "Master Hugues" it is a particular form of composition; in "Abt Vogler" the man and his relation as creator to his music is the inspiration, while in "Charles Avison" a special composition again gives rise to the conversation with its composer. In only one of these poems is the musician whose name appears the speaker; which is it? Who is the speaker in the other cases? The language made use of in these poems is so full of musical technicalities that, as a preliminary to their proper comprehension, it is necessary to explain these allusions. (For those in "A Toccata," see *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, Vol. IV., p. 369.)

This poem opens by the speaker's directly addressing Galuppi as to the meaning he perceives in his music. What does he declare is all that he can get out of this old music? Describe the picture of Venice and its life which the music calls up. Is this picture of Venice true to the life at the time when Galuppi lived? (See "Venice: An Historical Sketch," by Horatio E. Brown, chap. xxii.)

Notice that the various modulations are made by the speaker to fit in with definite moods of the Venetian belles and beaux he is imaging. What is the general tenor of these moods, — thoughtless joyousness, or gayety with an undercurrent of fear? In stanza xi. the speaker makes a reflection upon the

fact that he thought he had wrung a secret from nature ; what does he mean by this ?

Possibly he means that whenever he tries to believe that there was some immortal element even in the frivolous life of Venice, Galuppi's cold music dissipates it all by speaking to him only of its decay and death. If that is true of Venice, why not of himself too ? The music does not comfort him with anything better than a sarcastic fling at his knowledge of physics and geology. Might a wider application of the thought be made here, namely, that soul is not revealed any more in present-day culture than it was in the frivolity of eighteenth-century Venice ? Is there any indication that the speaker finds the music of Galuppi beautiful ? What do we learn of the character of the speaker ? What seems to be the mood induced in the listener by Galuppi's music ? Do you suppose that Galuppi was in a dismal mood when he wrote it, or is its effect on the modern listener due solely to its old-fashioned quality ?

Mrs. Ireland, writing of this poem in the London Browning Society Papers, says :—

“ We feel assured that the *Toccata* treated of in Browning's poem must have possessed considerable light and shade, for while its joyous lightness conjured up before the listener's mind the bewildering vision of festal scenes in ancient Venice, while it drew around him the balmy night of May, the intoxicating fragrance of roses and love and youth, the atmosphere surcharged with fulness of sensuous life, there were yet thrilling and tender cadences, surely some strains that had a ‘dying fall,’ dissonances even, powerful enough to interpose, with obtrusiveness, grim doubts in the very heart and core of the charmed moment—

doubts transient, quickly put aside or stifled, but ghastly in their suggestion of impending change, doom, and death."

This opinion is based upon the supposition that the music is a direct reflection of the gay life of the time, with its underlying sense of decay, while from our previous study of the poem it would appear that the music does not reflect the life directly, but only through associations in the mind of the listener, who finds the *Toccata* anything but gay. He also implies that while the suspensions and diminished sevenths may have told them something, they did not tell him anything. These intervals when used by the more modern harmonic writers produce rich effects, but by the earlier polyphonic writers they were apt to be used in a sort of wooden and mechanical way.

In "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha" we get more of the present scene than in "A Toccata." Is this done by any direct descriptions, or by means of side remarks which the organist lets fall as he is struggling with the fugue? (For a sketch of fugue-form, see Notes, *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IV., p. 382.)

What do we learn of the scene of the poem in the first few stanzas? What is the organist bent on discovering in the fugue of this composer? What sort of a composition is this fugue, as described by Browning? Compare the description in the poem with the account of a fugue given in the Notes. What conclusion does the organist at first come to in regard to the fugue? Notice the comparison with the gilt roof of the church over which is stretched a spider's web. What moral of life suggests itself to him as a result of this comparison as to the moral possibly meant by the composer? This conclusion not being exactly com-

plimentary to the fugue, how does he counteract it in stanzas xxv. and xxvi.? Returning to the fugue, what does he declare finally in regard to the moral? What puts an end to his playing? Why does he turn from the fugue to Palestrina? Palestrina was the first to release music from the dry formalism into which it had fallen in the hands of the contrapuntal writers; it would, therefore, be a marked contrast to the fugue he had been playing and a relief to his feelings. It has been also proposed that Palestrina represents the noble music of the Church, which did not obscure the truth by its over-elaboration. Is this a good suggestion? Was over-elaboration a mark of secular music as opposed to that of the Church?

In these two poems is it the personality of the composer or that of the one playing and speaking which dominates the tone of the poem? What mental picture do you form of their characters?

In "Abt Vogler" we get an inside view of the creator of music, — not as in the other poems merely of an interpreter. The musician himself speaks, giving expression to the thoughts which have arisen in him as he extemporizes. What does Abt Vogler compare his music to in the first verse? What is the story of Solomon and his palace? (Dr. Berdoe says: "Jewish legend gave Solomon sovereignty over the demons, and a lordship over the powers of nature. In the Moslem East these fables have found a resting-place in much of its literature from the Koran onwards. Solomon was thought to have owed his power over the spiritual world to the possession of a seal on which the 'most great name of God was engraved.'") See Lane, "Arabian Nights," *Introd.*, note 21, and chapter i., note 15.)



What is Vogler's first desire in regard to the music? How does he enlarge in stanzas ii. and iii. on the idea that the keys are the slaves of his will? What special appropriateness is there in speaking of notes in music as "eager to do, and die"? What myths are there as to the raising of walls by music? (For a comparison of music with architecture, see "The Boundaries of Music and Poetry," by Ambros.) What visions does he seem to see as he rears his palace of sound? What contrast does he make between painting, poetry, and music, in stanza vi.? In stanza vii. he declares that music is a direct inspiration untrammelled by laws. Is the Abbé right about this, or is he carried away by his enthusiasm for his own art? When it is remembered that it took man four thousand odd years to find out that it was agreeable to sound three notes together in a chord, does it not seem somewhat exaggerated to call it "the flash of the will that can"? Would it be more profound and none the less wonderful to call it the long struggle of the "will that can." How does the Abbé illustrate his point here? What does he mean by calling a chord in music a star? (See explanation given in Notes, *Camberwell Browning*, p. 309.) Furthermore, it may be said that a chord in music is like a piece of polished stone which aids in the building of the art edifice, and the flash of the individual will does indeed come in as the good Abbé rears his palace of sound (viii.). Upon realizing that his palace of music is gone, Vogler falls into a train of reflection. He first asks what comfort it is to him that other palaces as fine may be reared again, for he clings to the idea of permanency, — what was, shall be. What does he give as his belief in regard to good and evil in stanzas

ix. and x.? In xi., what attitude does he take in regard to the failures of life as compared with discords in music?

A discord in music is an interval which must be resolved; that is, followed by a concord. A piece of music, though it may begin with a discord, or, in technical language, a dissonance, must always end with a concord. Contrary to the impression given in the line, discords are not the enemies of harmony, but its stanch allies. They do not exist merely to make concords more prized; they exist because they are beautiful in themselves and beautiful in relation to concords.

Upon what is the faith of the Abbé founded, reason or intuition? "God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear." "'Tis we musicians know!" What is the mood expressed in the last stanza, and how does he illustrate it by means of musical symbolism? (See Notes.)

In "Charles Avison" the poet himself undisguisedly has a little talk with the once well-known English musician. How does he introduce the subject? Does it strike you as being a perfectly natural train of thought leading up to the subject, or does the transition from the introductory ruminations to the subject proper seem forced on account of the pun? It has the advantage at least of giving us a mental picture of the poet at his window this cold March morning watching the black-cap, while his active mind flies from thought to thought, weaving this interesting and profoundly philosophical poem. Observe how his imagination plays about the thought of Avison's March as it did about the black-cap. At stanza iv. he comes down to solid fact, and gives a description of the March

in musical parlance. What other early musicians come to Browning's mind as a result of his thinking of Avison's March, and how does he give us a glimpse of the musical controversies of the day? (For further information on these, see under names of musicians mentioned in Grove's "Dictionary of Music and Musicians" and Naumann's "History of Music.") In stanza v. what musical problem presents itself to him when he compares Avison's "evidence" with his own feelings? In stanza vi. he tackles the solution of the problem. He starts with a premise that no truer truth is obtainable by man than comes of music, but before proving this, he goes on to show first what music cannot do. How does he attempt to define the soul, and what illustrative image does he use?

This digression on the nature of the soul leads up to, and emphasizes the point the poet wishes to make; namely, that music is more distinctively than any other art the one which gives form to the moods, hates, loves, joys, etc., of the soul, and her triumph would be complete if the forms in which music is cast had an element of permanence in them.

This truth of the soul, then, is the truth that music gives to man, is it not? What does he say is the hitch which balks her of full triumph? And how does music compare with the other arts in its power to give permanent expression to a feeling? While she "dredges" deeper than the other arts, she seems even less able than they to give a permanent form, as he shows by remarking upon the fact that the popularity of the old composer wanes as the new one comes into view. His mood changes at stanza ix. Instead of noting the ever-new invasion, he facetiously imagines himself re-enlivening Avison's old March with modern

musical appliances. Note the symbol he uses and his description of how he will change the march. At stanza x. he grows serious again, and tells Avison not to fear any such irreverent innovation. In stanza xi. he quiets his doubts with the decision that even if the soul seeks ever-new forms of expression in music, still what has once lived can never die (compare with Abt Vogler's "There shall never be one lost good," line 69). But what must we do in order to appreciate the great musicians of the past?

Yet, again, before rejoicing over this decision the voice of doubt must be listened to. The poet does not believe that past knowledge is all futile, that it was only ignorance instead of knowledge in the bud destined to blossom in time, yet he remembers that old beliefs and opinions have passed away to give place to new ones, just as old tunes have. How is he to reconcile this philosophical creed with what seem to be facts of experience? In stanza xiii. he attempts the reconciliation, which is to the effect that the underlying truth is permanent, but that the manifestations of the eternal verities whether in music or in beliefs are constantly enlarging so that the older ones grow out of date. Therefore he will rejoice; Avison's March may be old-fashioned in form, but the march motive will bear resetting. As a final little quip he imagines what would be the effect of carrying a tune backwards instead of forwards, and concludes that by doing this unsuspected beauties would be revealed in Avison's March.

He seems to feel this attitude as somewhat disloyal, and ends by calling up a certain period of English history especially marked by a progressive impulse, and for which he is loath to think there was not music

fitted for the occasion. He will do what he can now any way by celebrating it with a glorious "subject" (theme for a fugue) of Bach's, and Avison shall help, and he writes a poem in honor of the heroes of that day — those who took the first steps toward that "Federated England" he foresees in stanza xiv. line 388.

*Queries for Debate.* — Do you remember to have read in any other poet poems upon music which showed such intimate acquaintanceship with its technical aspects? Do you consider the use of these technical terms unfitted for poetry, or an example of the fact that the realms of poetry may so be enlarged by the poet who can use them poetically?

Is David in "Saul" allied with any of these musicians in his attitude toward music?

What is the attitude of the speaker in "Fifine at the Fair"? Is Schumann's "Carnival" used in this poem much as the "Toccata" is used? Should you say that the principal difference is that in the "Toccata" the picture suggested by the music is a realistic, historical one, and the picture suggested by the "Carnival" music to the man in "Fifine" grows from a realistic image of the Carnival at Venice to a philosophical vision of human society? (For musical allusions and suggestions, see notes to *Camberwell Browning* on "Saul," Vol. IV., p. 375; on "Fifine at the Fair," Vol. IX., p. 288. Also remarks on the musical poems in Introduction to these volumes.)

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— The Philosophy of Music Indicated.

*Hints:* — The question has often been discussed as to whether music is capable of giving any definite impression as to its meaning. In "A Toccata" the music seems to give to the listener a very definite idea

of the life of Venice. Is it because there is anything in the music corresponding exactly to the mood of the life at that time, or is it rather the historical sense of the listener who calls up the picture? He knows the life of the time when Galuppi lived, and when he hears the music, association of ideas causes him to see the picture. Is not the mood produced by the music, one of coldness and deadness, exactly the opposite of the brightness of Venetian life? It cannot be said, then, that the "Toccata" gives a definite picture of Venetian life, for it would have been powerless to produce it without the historic knowledge of Galuppi and his times possessed by the listener.

On the other hand, Schumann's "Carnival" mentioned in "Fifine" deliberately attempts to put into music definite impressions. Much modern programme music does the same thing, as well as much of Wagner's music. To a certain extent it seems to be successful, though a large proportion of the success is due to the fact that cues to the meaning of the music are given either by deliberate descriptions, in acting, or in the titling of the music. The closer the attempt is toward the imitation of purely physical sounds, such as the neighing of horses, the singing of birds, etc., the more successful it is. It is to be observed, however, that the man in "Fifine" very soon leaves the concrete picture of Pantalón and Columbine, and through association, his historical sense, and his philosophizing predilections is led far afield by the music of Schumann.

In "Saul," again, the music of David has the desired effect upon Saul through association of ideas.

Has the organist in "Master Hugues" the same historical sense as the listener in "A Toccata"?



Or does he try to draw a meaning directly from the fugue? Does he in the end catch any intent of the composer, or does he merely attach a meaning to it from the outside, — a meaning, too, which is suggested entirely by the external form of the fugue, and not at all by its soul? Would a composition like this fugue be necessarily possessed of any soul? When contrapuntal writing was at its height, music was often so much a matter of rules and calculations that, instead of being the expression of the soul, it was merely an external and mechanical arrangement of sounds.

Observe, then, that in these poems the hearer gets out of the music very much what he puts into it himself. If he have a vivid imagination backed up by sufficient knowledge, he can see historical pictures or visions of the whole of human society. If he be of a moralizing turn of mind, he can extract a moral where none was intended. The question is whether any of these attitudes toward music indicate a truly musical appreciation of music.

Now let us see what Vogler feels about it. In "Abt Vogler" we do not have the effect of music on the listener, but its effect on its creator. Notice that Vogler does not attempt to express a definite meaning through his music, nor to find one afterwards. The comparisons he uses are all with the external form of music. What he builds is a beautiful palace of sound; the external manifestation of the wish of his soul to reach toward heaven.

By means of the wondrous beauty of his creation, earth and heaven seem to touch, and he sees visions. Not that the music in itself gives definite pictures of visions, but that the soul is so exalted by the beauty of his music that it induces a mood for visions. The



beauty and the evanescence of the music suggest two trains of philosophical thought: first, that any attainment which reaches out toward beauty and truth is a part of absolute beauty and truth, and is therefore eternal; second, that the failure to attain the perfect ideal of beauty and truth is in itself a proof that the perfect ideal will one day be realized; further, that all pain and evil is transitional, that its existence for a time is in order to add greater value to the joy which is to follow.

The Abbé's passion of soul is transformed into beauty in musical form; through that musical beauty would be reflected a mood of aspiration, but nothing more definite to one who could appreciate it in a true musical spirit. (For music as a suggester of moods, see "The Boundaries of Music and Poetry," by Ambros.) The trains of thought suggested are not such as would be deduced from any special musical composition, but grow from the analogies that may be drawn between the facts peculiar to musical extemporization and musical form and life; namely, evanescence, suggestive of the passing of all things; beauty, which in its recognition gives a sense of the absolute; contrast between discords and concords, which suggests the contrast between good and evil; and the harmony resulting from the admixture of discords with concords, suggesting that a completed view of life will show as great a harmony between good and evil. Notice once more that these thoughts of the Abbé are not the inspiration of the music, but follow as analogies after the music is finished. The sole inspiration of the music is his mood of aspiration.

When we come to "Charles Avison," we find that the poet considers music to be the expression in

artistic form of the moods of the soul, of which Abt Vogler is the living example. There is no question of its expressing anything more definite and concrete; the problem with him being, Why, since it does express these most fundamental and abstract truths, should it lose its power, as time passes, for making a direct emotional appeal to the listener? He is obliged to come to the conclusion that musical expression is relative, like all human expression. It is ever trying fully to reveal the soul, but is hampered by man's finiteness, yet, owing to this very lack, progress toward new forms is possible. "Autumn comes, So much the better," which compares well with Abt Vogler's "What is our failure here but a triumph's evidence of the fulness of the days?" What hope is there for the music that is dead and gone? It can only be made to speak again to us by the use of just such historical and imaginative methods as those used by the man in "A Toccata."

It has been suggested by Mr. Moseley, in Proceedings of the London Browning Society, that Browning, Wagner, and Schopenhauer's views are identical. He says:—

"Schopenhauer says it stands apart from all other arts in that it is not an imitation or reproduction of an Idea of the things in the world, but Speech of our deepest innermost self. Whilst the other arts objectivate the Will under mediation only, *i. e.* by means of Ideas, music is the *immediate* objectivation and image of the universal Will. It is by no means an *image* of the *Ideas* as the other arts are, but an *Image* of the Will itself: its effect so much more powerful and penetrating than that of other arts: for these speak of shadows only, whilst *it* speaks of *essentials*.

“Wagner says : ‘The essence of music is this, that which all other arts only indicate, through it and in it becomes unquestionable certainty, absolute and unequivocal truth’ (v. 247).

“Melody tells the hidden story of the will in the light of consciousness ; paints each emotion, each endeavor, each movement, all that reason gathers together under the wide and negative conception of feeling, and which it can no longer grasp as abstractions. Therefore also it has always been said that music is the speech of feeling and of passion, as language is of reason. The invention of melody, the exposition of all the deepest secrets of human desires and feelings, is the work of genius, whose work is here, more obviously than elsewhere, free from all reflection and conscious purpose, and may be called inspiration. The composer reveals the innermost essential being of the world, and expresses the profoundest wisdom in a language his reason does not understand ; as a magnetic somnambulist gives account of things of which she has no notion when awake.

“What is the meaning of Abt Vogler, xii. ? Schopenhauer will explain : —

“ ‘The essential nature of man consists in this, that his Will strives, is satisfied and strives again, and so on for ever, nay that happiness and wellbeing consist of this only, that the transition from wish to satisfaction and from satisfaction to a new wish should go on rapidly, as the failing of satisfaction produces suffering just as the absence of a new wish produces longing. Thus, in accordance with this, the essentials of melody consist in a continuous deviation, swerving from the key-note in a thousand ways, not only to the nearest harmonic notes, to the third or dominant,

but to every tone, to the dissonant seventh, and to augmented intervals; yet followed, in the end, by a return to the starting-point: in all these ways melody expresses the manifold strivings of the Will; whilst by the final return to some harmonic note, or more definitely, by a return to the key-note, its *satisfaction* is expressed.' "

From what has preceded, should you say that the opinions of the three are identical, or that Browning's includes and goes beyond all because he recognizes music's limitations? Does the man in "Fifine" differ from the poet in his musical philosophy except in the mode of his expression?

*Queries for Discussion.* — Do you think it true that all music reflects the moods of the soul? Could it be said of merely imitative music?

Is there not also much music which seems to be put together from the outside rather than from the inside, and not necessarily poor music, but music with something of the artistic quality of arabesque patterns?

Does Browning anywhere state that all music is a reflection of soul-moods, or does he only contend that the power to do this is music's greatest achievement?

Does he not insist too strongly upon the ephemeral nature of musical expression? Has not experience proved that whenever the high-water mark of musical expression has been reached, it has survived in great musical works of art? (For example, Handel's Oratorios, Beethoven's Symphonies.)

Is Browning's philosophy of music further borne out by the fact that these poems may be regarded as types of various phases of musical development? (See remarks on musical poems in Introduction to these

volumes; also Naumann's "History of Music" and Ritter's "History of Music" for accounts of musical development.)

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— Rhythm, Metre, and Ornament.

*Hints:* — "A Toccata" has eight stresses to the line, made up of seven trochaic feet with an extra stressed syllable at the end. The stanzas are of three lines, all rhyming together. Do you discover any variations from the normal line? On the whole, the form is monotonous, is it not? and well reproduces the monotony of the old Toccata. But upon this monotonous rhythm are embroidered so many lively thoughts, that the effect is a combination of gayness with an undercurrent of dulness exactly suited to the subject of the poem. The musical allusions have already been considered in relation to the subject-matter. Are there any allusions introduced merely for ornament? How about other forms of poetical ornamentation, — similes, metaphors, symbols? Are there many of them?

"Master Hugues" shows a little more variety in the construction of the stanza, — two lines with three stresses, two with four, and a last one with three; rhymes alternating, the last line rhyming with the first and third lines. The normal foot of the verse is a dactyl, but every line has an extra stressed syllable, and sometimes an extra unstressed one after the stressed one.

Observe all these little variations, also the nature of the rhymes, the double ones often being very ingenious. These rhymes have been found fault with for their uncouthness, but when you examine them, do you not find that they are mostly easy and natural,

and very well reflect the growing excitement of the organist as he gets deeper and deeper into the difficulties of the fugue? The close of the struggle with the fugue is marked by what change in the form? There are one or two elaborate comparisons in this poem; what are they, and which has the most intrinsic poetic beauty? Is the poem, on the whole, more figurative and more allusional in its language than the preceding poem?

It would be difficult to find a greater contrast in language than that between the two poems already spoken of and "Abt Vogler." Point out the reasons for this contrast, noticing the far greater richness of the imagery, the wider and more exalted range of thought, the smooth and harmonious flow of the language, depending largely upon alliteration. The construction of stanza and line is simple, — six stresses, with one and sometimes two unstressed syllables following, giving what Mr. Beatty calls iambic-logæædic metre; then a final stressed syllable.

There has been a good deal of talk as to the meaning of the line (52) "That out of three sounds he frame not a fourth sound, but a star." See explanation suggested in the Notes to *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. V., p. 309. The whole phrase may be taken also as a symbol of the distinctive character of musical art as compared with other arts. Painting, for example, imitates the harmonies of color found in nature, but musical harmonies seem to be the result of human invention entirely, which first chooses out certain sounds and then chooses to combine them in stars of sound. This is still true artistically, although science has discovered that, with the exception of the minor third, the fundamental intervals used in music are



found combined in nature as partial vibrations (called overtones) of any vibrating body sounding a given note. The Abbé was, of course, not aware of this modern scientific discovery. With regard to the musical allusions in this poem, are they used quite in the same way as they are in the others? or do the different attitudes in the three poems necessarily result in a different use of the allusions?

The chief interest in the form in "Charles Avison" is in the variety of grouping in the rhymes. The metre is that of blank verse, iambic pentameter. Another thing to be noticed is the way in which the lines run on, line after line. How many end-stopped lines are there in this poem of 433 lines? In spite of the fact that the sentences are mostly very long, the meaning is not difficult on that account, is it? Which do you consider the most difficult passages, and why? And which do you consider the most beautiful passages, and why? Although this poem is so long and argumentative, do you not find the interest kept up all through by the changes in mood? For example, first, the poet's observation of the black-cap; second, his imagination rushing off at the thought of the march; third, the prosaic description of the march; fourth, the pondering over the problem; fifth, philosophizing, first upon the soul, then upon the provinces of the arts; sixth, an outbreak of humor, wherein he tries to reinstate Avison; seventh, more philosophy, in which his optimistic theories struggle somewhat with the data of experience; eighth, a triumphant mood; ninth, another attempt to prove the worth of Avison's March by showing how much it was ahead of Elizabethan plain-song; and, finally, triumph once more. Loath to think England's heroes



of the past did not have good music, he will make it all right any way by cheering them now with music to his choice, and, loyal to Avison, will let him help. Perhaps it would not be stretching too much of a point to compare this poem to a musical composition with several themes that recur at different intervals, one soaring and imaginative, one questioning and philosophical, one light and humorous, one triumphant. Would it give the poem needed artistic unity to think of it in this way? Is there any passage in the poem which would give direct credence to this idea?

*Queries for Discussion.*—What reasons can you think of which cause Browning always to dwell upon instrumental rather than vocal music? Is it another sign of his originality in the treatment of the subject?

Should you say that his musical poems prove that the poet was haunted by the fact of music's evanescent power?

Do you suppose this feeling of his was enhanced by the Wagner craze and the talk about the music of the future which has agitated the musical world for so many years?

Is this talk dying out, and a recognition of the greatness of each musical age for its own special qualities taking its place?

The poet's evident wish that there should not be one lost good in music indicates that he would have hailed the sane attitude of the present, does it not?

## THE POET

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Compare Aprile in "Paracelsus," part ii., vol i. 82, 309; "Sordello," ii. 93, 309; Ronsard and Marot in "The Glove," iv. 162, 185; passages in "The Ring and the Book," parts i. lines 410-470, 712-779, 1348-1365, xii. 835 foll.; "Two Poets of Croisic," lines 1210-1280, x. 235, 306; "Parleying with Christopher Smart," xii. 101, 330. ["Sordello" and "Smart" belong as wholes under this subject, but they are taken up later in "Single Poem Studies," which may be combined at pleasure with this programme, or excluded from it on account of their length and subtlety.] On the poet considered as a writer of dramas, see "Aristophanes' Apology;" and on Browning with reference to himself as poet, see "Pacchiarotto" and Epilogue, and "Pambo," ix. 171, 294, and xi. 286, 337.

Consult, also, Browning's Essay on Shelley given in *Camberwell Browning*, vol. xii p. 383.

I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
 — The Poet-Nature.

*Hints:* — The inner nature of a poet is Browning's earliest subject-matter. It is evidence of his genuineness as a budding artist intending to model human life dramatically, that the theme he started out with, at twenty years of age, was one he really knew.

The way in which he presented the poet nature in "Pauline" is shapeless, and the sequence of experiences and confidences is confused (for digest, see *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, as cited above, and Introduction, pp. xxxix–xliv); but the characteristic traits of this poet's nature are clear: a central over-consciousness, capable, with development, not only of looking on at its own qualities and processes, but of disposing them at will; and an insatiable thirst for knowledge and experience of all sorts. The main powers and habits of his mind are almost equally clear: a vitalizing imagination; a trust in his own close relation to a higher power. The lack of development in the exercise of this central consciousness is evident in the planlessness of its expression. The way in which this insatiable thirst led to dissipation in sensation, and to action and thought having reference to self alone, so that a state of lovelessness and godlessness followed, is almost a necessary result of the natural play of a nature born with such characteristics. But its deliverance is almost equally a foregone conclusion; and although the process of self-deliverance is indistinctly presented in the poem, the material from which it may be collected is supplied. The underlying confidence in the higher power of God — obscured by the enjoyment of personal desires which made self a centre, instead of God, or instead of any other object of love not subordinate to self —

is finally restored by consciousness itself. The self, become conscious of weakness and mortality, is led to a sense of the comfort of Pauline's love, and thence to the old need of an infinite love. All the story this poem has consists in this restoration of the self to its primal need. The rest of "Pauline" furnishes nothing else that throws light on the poet-nature, beyond lovely example after example of the gift of vivid, beauty-bestowing imagination, except for the light thrown upon one other similar reconciliation of a power of the poet-nature inconsistent in its exercise with that nature itself. This power is its craving for all knowledge, a craving inconsistent with the craving for appropriating to itself all passion. The necessity of accommodating these two to each other awakens his will to use the one for the sake of the other. But in choosing between giving the rein to reason or to love, he is again and often lost in difficulty, and so throughout "Pauline" we have the oscillations of a nature beginning to be aware of itself and trying to put its elements into coherent relation, but with failure or half-success.

In comparison with this self-centred, self-aggrandizing poet-nature, the nature of Aprile, the poet of "Paracelsus," is strong in an equally innate desire for the out-flowing of self. But in the exercise of his desire to love infinitely and be loved, Aprile fails also. His intuitional insight and sympathy were so comprehensive that the ready and serviceable means to express them were missed or spurned by a will as much too widely impassioned and reckless of control as that of the poet of "Pauline" was too self-centred and adroit. The inborn tendency of the one poet-nature to appropriate to itself all beauty of knowledge and feeling is in Aprile a contrary ten-

dency to dower all men with the beauty their own natures but dimly guess, and in so doing to gain his reward, their love or that of the Infinite Love.

Browning followed up these two first sketches of supplementary poet-natures, by showing, in "Sordello," how still another variety of the poet-nature, starting out in life with as passionate a yearning as Aprile's to spend itself in outgoing desire, and as self-centred a motive in enjoying it as that of the poet of "Pauline," is tutored, by contact with social life, and through accommodating, in the practical exercise of his art, his gifts and desires with the difficulties encountered, to learn something, finally, of the mastery belonging to the centralized consciousness and self-control of the poet of "Pauline," and something of the social love belonging to Aprile's wide sympathy with humanity.

In Sordello's case, however, it would seem that it was never a mere yearning of love for mankind, like Aprile's, although he came to feel that, which instigated him to poetic creation, but the gratification of an insuppressible will. In this respect his nature is more akin to that of the poet of "Pauline," whose initial impulse found its basis in self.

Eglamor, the minor poet of "Sordello," was of still another type, of less exalted gifts than any of these his brother poets, being merely the lowly yet loyal slave of song, shaped by art, as it were, instead of aspiring to shape it. Although Aprile may be linked with Eglamor in his desire to spend himself in outflow, he is distinguished from him by the dramatic bent of his genius. And though Eglamor may have attained a greater measure of success than either Aprile or the poet of "Pauline," theirs were failures of a

pioneer sort, their schemes being ahead of their accomplishment. They were both failures through complexity of power, while Eglamor, being merely a faithful imitative workman, had no such complexities of desires to satisfy.

Browning's Essay on Shelley (see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. XII., p. 383), after distinctly defining the two great classes of poet-nature, ordinarily called objective and subjective, — the one as reproducing things external, either scenic or human, with reference to men; the other as embodying his own perceptions, "not so much with reference to the many below as the One above" — calls attention to the fact that there is "not so much essential distinction in the faculty of the two poets, . . . as in the . . . adaptability" of the objects used by either to the "distinct purpose of each." The poet whose study is himself with reference to the absolute intelligence and whose usual material is Idea and Nature, and the poet whose study is the doings of men and whose usual material is human action and effect, may interchange material and keep their distinct purpose and mode of working. Moreover, the two modes of working might be followed successively by the same poet in perfection; or there might be "a mere running in of the one faculty upon the other . . . the ordinary circumstance."

Has Browning shown in the poet of "Pauline" a poet with mixed gifts, — his self-centred consciousness being a gift adapting him to the work of the dramatic poet, who is able to externalize his material so that it may appeal to the aggregate understanding of men; his yearning towards a God rather than towards human love being a gift of spiritual perception adapt-



ing him to the work of the subjective poet, whose attempt is the embodiment of absolute truth, "not what man sees, but what God sees"? May such a confusion of gifts, although differently commingled, which he also was not strong enough to master, have been meant to characterize Aprile? Both would then represent types of the poet-nature sketched as in the process of evolution; while in Sordello a full-length portrait of a poet-nature, dowered distinctively with the will to create, seems to be presented as having the capability to pass through successive stages of development, both as to faculty and purpose.

The references to Shelley in "Pauline" forbid the supposition that Shelley is portrayed in the poet of "Pauline." What sort of poet-nature is presented, and can you find any actual poet whom the description fits? If there is a likeness to Shelley which comes out in the evidently strong influence of Shelley upon him, in what does it consist? Notice the essential difference, — his distinctive self-consciousness which Shelley as distinctively lacked? Would Keats or the young Browning (not the ripe Browning) suit the character? Say why?

For suggestions as to signs of Browning's sympathy with Shelley, see Florence Converse's "Shelley's Influence on Browning" (*Poet-lore*, Vol. VII., pp. 18-28, January, 1895).

The poet-nature is not directly treated in "Memorabilia." It comes out, in that bit of homage to Shelley, only in the guise of the sense of inner eventfulness the poet-nature has the power to stir so deeply.

In "Popularity," also, Keats is not directly praised, but is made an instance of the originality peculiar to the rare and distinctive poet-nature which gives its work

so new and fresh a quality. So primitive and close to nature is it, that it is at first misunderstood and despised, and afterwards slavishly imitated, not merely by gentle and kindly Egglamors, but by grossly commercial Nokeses and Stokeses, who reap the reward Keats died without.

The poet who poetizes general truths bare of illusion is the subject of "Transcendentalism." His way of separating principles from their embodiment is compared with the metaphysical way of looking at life, by a brother-poet whose claim for any poet is that he ought to be like the magician, charming men with convincing apparitions of life ; instead of like the theologian, drawing abstractions from it. True in practice to his theory of the poet, this brother-poet sees a poem in the poet whose theory he criticises. And this poem is made, by Browning himself, in accordance with the same principle of poetic art. In place of launching out upon abstract principles, he presents a picture of two poets conferring together, thus embodying vividly two different views of poetic art.

But how do you think this poem should be understood ? Is it "a genuine piece of criticism," as Mrs. Orr declares ; or is it intended by Browning as an answer to his critics, as Dr. Berdoo thinks probable, who says : "It has been said of Mr. Browning's poetry by a hundred competent writers that he does not sing, but philosophizes instead ; that he gives the world his naked thoughts, his analyses of souls not draped in the beauty of the poet's art, but in the form of 'stark-naked thought.' There is no objection, says his interviewer, if he will but cast aside the harp which he does not play but only tunes and adjusts, and

speak his prose to Europe through ‘the six-foot Swiss tube which helps the hunter’s voice from Alp to Alp.’ The fault is, that he utters thoughts to men thinking they care little for form or melody, as boys do. It is quite otherwise he should interpret nature — which is full of mystery — to the soul of man: as Jacob Boehme heard the plants speak, and told men what they said; or as John of Halberstadt, the magician, who by his will-power could create the flowers Boehme thought about. The true poet is a poem himself, whatever be his utterance.”

Is it a critic — an interviewer, as Dr. Berdoo explains, or a “brother-poet,” as Browning says — who speaks in this poem? Is there a discrimination made between the way he should interpret Nature and Thought? And is no discrimination made between Jacob Boehme’s and John of Halberstadt’s methods as symbols of different poetic methods? Why, then, are these methods introduced and contrasted? Are both considered equally good, in the poem, as poetic methods? And is the gist of “Transcendentalism,” therefore, that the manner of the utterance is unimportant, because “the true poet is a poem whatever be his utterance?” Or is it not rather that the manner of utterance is important; and that although the author writing out his bare thoughts may himself be a poem, the poem he writes is “naught”?

Should the poem be interpreted symbolically, as suggested in *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. V., p. 281, or taken literally, as Browning’s apology to his critics? If the latter, what does the apology amount to as a defence?

The speaker of “How it Strikes a Contemporary” is an idler of the poet’s own town and time, whose

conception of the poet-nature is colored by his point of view. He misunderstands it, and falls far short of appreciating its value, and yet he has a lurking suspicion of this man's mysterious importance, though naturally he construes this to be importance to the King, as a spy, instead of importance to a higher power whence the poetic gift that marks him from other men is derived. His townsman is himself finally led to suggest this, as if he saw through his own comparison, at the end of the poem, in his talk about the poet's death. How far can the account given of the poet's life and habits by the townsman be trusted? Is his observation of facts, for instance, as to what the poet looked at in the street, etc., to be depended upon, but his interpretation of them to be taken with a grain of salt? How much allowance must be made for Browning's humorous treatment of the theme? What sort of nature does his contemporary's account of him lead you to suppose the poet had? To what class of poet-nature did he belong? Was he a poet of nature, a subjective poet, or a dramatist? Why must he have been whatever you think the poem authorizes you to conclude, and not a poet of either of the other two sorts?

"At the 'Mermaid,' " "House," and "Shop" are a group of poems in which Browning had the poet-nature of Shakespeare more or less directly in mind. They appear to have been called out by opposition to the theories of Shakespeare's personality uppermost at about the time they were written, but which are now, a decade after Browning's death, undergoing considerable modification in general consonance with Browning's view. (See particularly Sidney Lee's "Shakespeare," as opposed to Tyler's "Sonnets of

Shakespeare.” For digests of the poems, see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IX., p. 298.) These theories might be briefly stated thus : (1) that Shakespeare’s life may be discovered in his work, and that cynicism toward life and especially toward women are revealed in it ; (2) that the Sonnets are autobiographical in detailed and literal ways ; (3) that money was his main object in writing, and his care for becoming a gentleman of landed estate with tithes to collect and law-suits on hand, the sufficient explanation of his career. The three poems successively take up some phase of these three suppositions.

In “ At the ‘ Mermaid ’ ” a scene is presented in which Shakespeare is speaking in the midst of a circle of his sherris-drinking contemporaries, frequenters of the “ Mermaid ” tavern. He refers to the partisan quarrels and rival ambitions seething about him in which he is vainly tempted to take an active part ; claiming for himself excuse both from the honors and the entanglements in which they would involve him. Browning makes him refer especially to the post of chief poet and the price that has to be paid for it, — homage to grandees and squabbles with rivals, — in contrast with the life full of zest he lives aloof from cynicism either as to Love, Fortune, or Fame.

“ House ” is less directly applicable to Shakespeare ; but, beneath the symbol used of a house open to a gaping public, and his own refusal to make his privacy open to any but the spirit-sense in sonnet-singing, the reference to investigations of Shakespeare’s Sonnets for particulars of his private life is obvious. The tenth stanza emphasizes this. The exclamation “ Hoity toity,” etc., and the reminder that Shakespeare did what the speaker refuses to do, is put, dra-

matically, in the mouths of such investigators. On the rejoinder, which questions it, — as much as to say, I, for one, do not accept this statement of yours, — declaring, on the contrary, that it is inconsistent with Shakespeare's character, is based a divination of what that poet's nature really was; that is, so supremely dramatic in his plays that he himself must have had the soul corresponding to the dramatic bent.

“Shop” makes no reference to Shakespeare, but is a supplementary poem to “House,” bringing up a companion symbol of a shop in which the whole life of the shop-keeper is swallowed up. It is a vivid way of showing by an analogy what the theory of a man like Shakespeare, having no glimpse beyond material success in his work, would make him out to be. Browning's own way of dealing with the fact that Shakespeare worked to meet the theatrical market, etc., may be inferred from the closing stanzas carrying on the parable (lines 90-110). Because we know nothing certainly of any inner life after his retirement, which took place while not yet an old man, it does not in the least follow that there was none. Not external facts that there was any such life prove it, but the poet-nature of the man does. “Ask himself!” (See line 91.) It is inconsistent with his poet-nature to suppose “all his music” to be “money chink.” Because he had to look out for material success, and did so, does it therefore follow that there were no thoughts, fancies, loves, “except what trade can give”? (See stanza xx.) Again, in the last two stanzas, under the veil of the symbol of shop-keeping, Browning, for one, declares this theory of Shakespeare most unlikely and unnatural, and he asserts, on the



contrary, his protest against such absorption of the soul in the means of living that there was no life, beside, in so strong a way that the opposite idea is intimated. (For further hints on Browning's implications concerning Shakespeare in these poems, see "Browning's Tribute to Shakespeare," *Poet-lore*, Vol. III., pp. 216-221, April, 1891.)

How does "The Names" compare with these poems in presenting a view of Shakespeare's nature? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. XII., Notes, for explanation of the figure used as to names.) What do you think of the sonnet as praise? Could it be higher? Is it characteristic of Browning, that his Sonnet in honor of Shakespeare does not draw out of him so graphic a picture of the great dramatist's nature as these symbolic poems?

Browning explained in his Album Lines (*Camberwell Browning*, Vol. XII., p. 273) that he was thinking of Dante when he wrote "Touch him ne'er so lightly," and of other such great national poets. How does the poem suit this explanation? Notice that the first stanza is a speech from the mouth of some critic whose attitude Browning represents as assuming to be all-sufficient upon his subject. That subject is the poet-soul, which he expounds to be an easy-singing nature, blooming without inward struggle, like a flower. This view the poet, apparently, as interlocutor, combats skeptically in the second stanza, in much the same manner as he questioned the view of Shakespeare's soul held by some critics as if it were perfectly known and understood. This he does merely by his doubting "Indeed?" as if his recollection glanced at once to historic examples of a contrary fact, where hard conditions and all kinds of weather, good and bad,



slowly bred not so much the flowers of poetry and easy recognition, but the tenacious tree, quietly growing, which proves to be the heritage of more than one generation. Observe the indirect implication that the critic's description does indeed apply to the lesser though not to the greater poet-nature. How true is the picture drawn in the second stanza to Dante? Compare the lines to Dante in "Sordello," Book I., lines 348-372.

In his Sonnet on Goldoni one of these slighter poet-natures is praised. How is this done? Is any incapacity shown to appreciate the Venetian comedian's lighter form of genius, because of his emphasis in the Epilogue on the enduring importance to the world of a weightier kind of poet, like Dante?

What conclusions may be drawn from the fact that many of Browning's portraits of poets have reference to actual historic poets? How many are imaginative? And how many are partly historical or typical?

*Queries for Discussion.* — Is there reason to suppose that Cervantes stood for the portrait of the poet-nature drawn in "How it Strikes a Contemporary"? or is it better to suppose it stands for any typically dramatic poet?

Is Browning's conception of Shakespeare in "At the 'Mermaid'" a proof of his correct insight? Is his opposition in "House" to the autobiographical theory of Shakespeare's Sonnets justifiable?

Do Browning's portrayals of the poet reveal his predilection for originality in poetry, as opposed to imitative and technical excellence, and for the dramatic or vividly objective modes of poetical work, instead of the pictorial or didactic and generalizing? If so, does this revelation of his sympathies show that his

own poetry did, in his judgment, belong to this objective class of work ; or that he had no knowledge of himself ?

How does Browning's treatment of the poet in these poems compare with that of his contemporaries, — Tennyson's, for example, in "The Poet," "The Poet's Mind," "Lucretius," "To Victor Hugo," "To Dante," "To Virgil," "The Dead Prophet" ?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Discussion.* — The Poet and the World.

*Hints :* — In which of the poems cited in this series is the poet's relation with the world brought out ?

In "Pauline," the beautiful imagery (lines 151–205) which is employed to picture what Shelley was to the young poet and what he finds him to be to the world, at first neglectful of him, is almost the only flattering reference to the general public the young poet's confidences to "Pauline" afford. "World's influence" upon himself (see lines 349–354) was deemed so deteriorating that only loneliness could cure him after it. Shelley, and a world of choice spirits, select, and known to him in books, are really, except for Pauline, his links of sympathy with the outside world ; but these he does not account as "real life," and although the enthusiasm for that which he has received from Shelley, and the plan to help men which he has derived from Plato, determine his "plan to look on real life, the life all new" to him (lines 441–464), he is not only disappointed and disillusionized with the world when he does try to know something of it, but content to have it so, since his own powers are strengthened by the experience. Even the influence of the select souls of poets over men begins to seem vain ; and his only comfort is

in his own homage to them (529-569 and 690-697), and to England, clung to somewhat desperately and almost as a conventional form or mere mental habit. Pauline's suggestion that "a perfect bard was one who chronicled the stages of all life" (883) embodies the most luminous conception of the world as related to the poet which the poem contains, and the most hopeful to the young poet, for it helps him out of his maze and urges him to tell at least his own story as an example of one stage of life, which may, indeed, as he divines (1009-1021), open up to him the beauty and validity of other stages of life.

Aprile's first word, on the other hand, is of the God-given office of the poet to the world, and his beautiful song in "Paracelsus," Book II., lines 281-339, is an anguished lament over the unexerted powers of dead poets who left the world they were to loosen, bound. Nor has he an altogether vague conception of what the poet may do to fulfil his office in saying better than he for the "lowest hind" "his own heart's language."

But in "Sordello" the poet who created Aprile has taken a long step onward in social experience when he sets out to show not merely the value of the poet to the world, but of the world to the poet. (See the brief general digest of "Sordello," *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. II., pp. 309 and 310; also the Introduction, pp. vii-x.)

How do "Memorabilia" and "Popularity" illustrate the poet's relation with the world? Are they indicative, like "Sordello," of a treatment of the poet by Browning from a more sophisticated point of view, because they place in contrast the sympathetic and the unsympathetic relation of a poet with the pub-

lic? This comes out in "Memorabilia," through the speaker's keen sense of the unusual and significant in merely once seeing and speaking with Shelley, and through the indifference of the person who did see him and speak to him. How does this little poem in its first two stanzas alone and through the mouth of but one speaker manage to give you such an impression of the poet in his relation to these two persons? Are the seventh and eighth lines the most tell-tale in giving the two points of view? Notice in what dazzlingly high relief the inner eventfulness of Shelley to the speaker is put by the simile of the moors and the feather in the other two stanzas.

In "Popularity" the contrast between public sympathy and indifference to spiritual originality in a poet is drawn by presenting the effect of his new quality on the one man who when he saw him knew him and named him a star, man's "star, God's glow-worm" (lines 4-6), and who, foreseeing the increasing homage his poetry will win in the future, attempts to draw him as he stands, in the present, with few or none noticing him or marvelling over the spoils his skill has brought to land out of the great deep (lines 21-25). Then this contrast between public sympathy and indifference is made still stronger by bringing into the picture a third and a fourth class of public opinion: the third is represented by the bystander who could criticise and quote tradition on classic examples of just the sort of artistic result this poet has rediscovered the native material for (lines 31-40); and the fourth is represented by the train of imitators who catch up some dilution of this rediscovered poetic material, and thrive on the use of that for which the poet received no such reward. These two classes of

the public show not indifference, but stupidity in their relation to the poet and his work. They lack the alertness of understanding to appreciate the poet promptly, but neither the knowledge that might have helped them to be wiser, nor the ready talent and merely technical dexterity that enable them to get some good for themselves out of the master-poet's original toil. Observe, too, that a special touch is given each one of the train of imitators, who show both their nature and the momentum of Keats's fame in the fact that Hobbs only "hints" blue very conservatively, while Nobbs "prints" it venturously, and Nokes and Stokes compete with each other in rashly "azure feats."

The relation of the poet to the world illustrated in "Transcendentalism" amounts to the assertion of a general poetic principle. If the poem is to be taken as genuine in its critical import, it implies that imagery or symbolism, the "draping of naked thoughts in sights and sounds," is the essential difference between poetry and prose; and that this is what the developed mind, that is, the reader whose intellectual and æsthetic sensibility is really cultured and mature, desires above all else in poetry. Notice that the supposition that boys seek for images and melody, and men for reason, in poetry is put in the mouth of the boy-poet; and that a deepening of the import of his argument is the turn the other poet gives this in his rejoinder. It is "quite otherwise," says he. In youth objects do not strike us as wonderful, we take them for granted, and only concern ourselves about their hidden meaning; but when we know more of life, we prize life itself and hail every evidence of its power and beauty. Is this not true of mankind in general as well as of individuals;

the early concern of races, in their infancy, being to attach supernatural doctrines and unreal origins to natural objects, which later in intellectual development the mind of man has been content to observe and investigate for their own sake, recognizing in these objects themselves their native vitality and beauty? This suggests, perhaps, not only that science is a later growth than theology, but also that realism in the sense of interest in real life is a later product in literature — including poetry — than romanticism in the sense of unreal or impossible life. If the poet's strongest and closest relation with his public consists, then, in his presentation of life to that public, does it not also reveal the supplementary general poetic principle that the poet must depend upon objective life to convey to his public thoughts and reason? In other words, does it follow, because poetry must make use of objects, that it shall not transcend the objective and give forth spiritual truths by means of them? Or what is the trend of "Transcendentalism"? Does the interrupting poet object to the boy poet because he thinks he ought not to introduce thoughts or reason in poetry, or only because his method of introducing them is not an effective and wise one, is not an artistic method?

Neither the sophisticated man who is amused at another's starting when he hears this favored one has actually met Shelley, as in "Memorabilia;" nor the appreciative man in "Popularity," who recognizes a Keats as soon as he sees him; nor dull scholars who know all about the classics but never could get any inspiration out of Lemprière's Dictionary or their own sense of beauty, as Keats did; nor yet clever minor poets who took their cue from the new poet;



nor the brother-poet who cautions an ardent boy in his poetic attempts, as in "Transcendentalism;" but quite a different sort of member of the general public is presented with relation to a poet in "How it Strikes a Contemporary." How would you describe him from the clues the poem gives? Would you take him to be familiar with any book at all? It seems to be more than he would do to glance "with half an eye" at the books on the stall in the street, the fly-leaf ballads, or the "broad-edge bold-print posters on the wall," the notice of which by the poet he is talking about is among his proofs of the cognizance the strange fellow took "of men and things." And what conclusions do you draw of him from the other ways in which he, who could never write a verse, describes the only poet he ever knew in his life? How does he describe this poet's clothes, and notice what he lets fall about his own; his breathing himself on the promenade at the unfashionable hour, his "bloodlessness," and the fact that he found "no truth in one report," since the "poor man" lived "quite another kind of life," etc.? Does this young Spanish dandy describe himself more unmistakably than he describes the poet? Is he not an example of the vague and mysterious effect a poet of widespread fame might have on a gay and credulous unlettered young man about town?

In the Shakespearian group of poems the poet exposes the envy and ready suspicions of evil born of a facility in persons generally for judging the most different personality by themselves, which makes them love to blur a shining mark, unable to understand its distinction and grudging to yield it the advantage of its own nature over theirs.

“At the ‘Mermaid,’” in particular, brings out more directly than the preceding poems the inner portrait of the central figure, the poet himself, — Shakespeare. As Browning conceives him, what sort of a man is he in his relation with the world? Notice the light opinion he has of the insight of the good fellows about him (lines 9–12). He is not likely to open his heart expansively to the roomful (see stanza v.). He is alive to the weaknesses of humanity, and keenly aware of the unlovely itch it has to find that the bard is weak and human too (as if that were at all strange!), and he declares, therefore, that just because he knows he is mortal, he will not enjoy such groveling, but, shutting the door to that sort of thing, cleave for himself to the uplift of his work, leaving them their choice in what concerns themselves, not him (lines 41–56 and 69–72). But though he seems not to claim that weaknesses do not belong to him, their fellow-man, he does maintain that reveling in the fact of weakness and meanness and the imperfections of life is not his foible; his outlook is rosy, not grim; scorning neither high nor low, finding himself akin to opposite natures, he does not scout mankind; and, as for womankind, blesses his good fortune, which, if not theirs, may be, he insinuates, because their treatment of her called out the response they blame (lines 73–120). This being his relation with the public about him, the relation of his work and himself to fame, which starts him in his monologue (stanza i.), is that of one who lays no claim to special honor in his own day; and as to the future he does not anticipate, but awaits judgment (stanzas xvi. and xviii.). What is the meaning of the seventeenth stanza in showing the relation of Shake-

Shakespeare's work and personality to the world? Does it intimate that the outpourings of a poet's weakness do not assimilate with the life of other men except in an external way, and that instead of reaching the heart of the world they pass away without permanently affecting it? Is this peculiarly true of Shakespeare's weaknesses, whatever they may have been?

That what makes the poet's inner life distinctively his own must necessarily be deeper than externalities, is the gist of "House." That rich evidence of genius in a poet's work must have been based on more of individual life than can meet the world's eye, is the implication of "Shop."

Does the contention of "Touch him ne'er so lightly," that the world-poet's growth is not an easy process, accord with the view of Shakespeare presented?

Verse-making is compared with love-making in relation to the poet, in the lyric following "Cherries" in "Ferishtah's Fancies," in order to show how it is a process of infinite capabilities, not merely in what has been done, but in all that might be, so that the most one can do in it is little enough; while love-making, although also of infinite significance, is so condensed in each experience of love that the least each one can feel is enough. Verse-making as an occupation in its relation to the world, the subject of the last lyric, asserts that the poet may justly regard the fame that brings love as irrelevant to his artistic aims. If he poured his whole life recklessly into his work for the sake of what it would bring him, taking no joy in life himself, then he might complain with reason if love were lacking. But reward

and aim of another sort inciting him, and his life for its own sake being good, praise or just judgment will be welcome, but love must not affect his design.

Do you think this an ungracious expression of the relation between the poet and the world, or does the self-poise expected on either side, of the poet and his appreciators, appeal to you as a fine element affording a better co-relation, — one tending to awaken a more genuine regard on both sides?

Metaphors drawn from nature, the accepted mode of using imagery in love lyrics, are found to be an insufficient kind of art in "Poetics," compared with similes drawn from human appearance. Does this evolved kind of poetics suggest that the relation of mankind to the poet is fundamental, affecting even his *technique*, — the stuff out of which he must weave his choicest comparisons being human nature itself?

*Queries for Discussion.* — Is Browning's way of treating of the poet in relation to his public, so as to present a variety of the personalities composing that public, a common trait of poems on the poet? Compare and discuss, for example, with the poems on poets by Tennyson before cited.

Does Browning's philosophy of poetic art, as revealed in these poems, rank him with the critics who hold to the theory of art for art's sake or with those who believe in art for life's sake?

Does the drift of the "Parleying with Christopher Smart" summed up in the closing verses, "Live and learn, not first learn and then live, is our concern," apply especially to poetic art, and is it consistent with the general poetic principle illustrated in "Transcendentalism"?

Would it be a sound criticism to judge of a poet's genius, as Browning suggests in "The Two Poets of Croisic," to ask if he led "a happy life"?

Should the true poet sing to the masses, not to the few, as Naddo says in "Sordello;" and if Browning does not agree with him, is he wrong? (See "Sordello," Book III., lines 784-815.)

What should be the poet's attitude toward his critics? And what should be the critic's attitude toward the poet?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Browning's Poetics in the Poet-Poems.

*Hints:* — When you look inquiringly at "Pauline" to discover the artistic reason why its imagery and poetic atmosphere differ so markedly from the rest of Browning's work in which the poet is the subject, the redundancy of its similes is perhaps the most noticeable difference you can put your finger on. For example, when the young poet realizes that the cynicism as to mankind and life, which seemed at first to leave him freer and stronger than ever, isolating him from any outward aim or devotion, was the defect of his special quality of a distinct self-consciousness, or over-consciousness, and was weakening actually, instead of strengthening, the powers he so delighted in, he expresses this in a series of original and striking images, so that they get in one another's way, and he embroiders these images with such picturesque details that the details block the road of the image itself. So, in lines 90-123, he likens this course astray of his soul to the circuit of a celestial body, once free to revolve at large, but now confined to a subordinate path about an inferior orb. Then the sense that this is a direct result of his own nature is

vividly put as a feeling visiting him in dreams that he himself is the fate he flees from ; and then, successively, two images of this same situation of self-disenchantment, each more elaborate than the other, picture it again, — the first that of the swan, like a moonbeam, kept with him, in the ocean-cave where he is, till it loses its beauty ; then, second, that of a radiant god growing less radiant on earth while he sings of heaven to a young witch who lured him from his home. Notice all the details that are added to these similes.

Again, in lines 172–200, what succession of figures illustrates that which has been already said figuratively (156–160), about his half-pleasure, half-disappointment, in finding that Shelley's genius was the world's and not alone his own delight? What other such similes are there? Are the figures in "Pauline" mostly drawn from celestial and natural objects? And when human analogies are used, how are they qualified by a strange or semi-human aspect? Notice lines 451–456, 956 and 957, 1027, etc. Which allusions and figures are drawn from classic legends? (For explanation of these, see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. I., p. 301.) Do these similes suit the poet of "Pauline" especially? Although they fit the character and are an integral part of his confessions, do you feel sure that they were due to design, or that they were in part, at any rate, natural to the young Browning?

"Memorabilia" and "Popularity" are in strong contrast, in their comparatively simple imagery, with the richness of "Pauline." Do they give you the impression of employing a single image more continuously, in all its ins and outs, to fit the idea intended



to be brought out, and of selection of the one, unembarrassed with others that might throng to mind as the most forcible for the embodiment of the idea? Notice what these images are. In "Memorabilia" the metaphor is the moulted eagle feather picked up on the moors. The feather is an event. The moors, miles of them, are blank except for this. This metaphor of double comparison given in the two closing stanzas is co-extensive with the idea the poem conveys. In it, in fact, the poem consists, for the two preceding stanzas but lead up to this, themselves containing but the bare account of the meeting with the man who had once met Shelley. After the picking up of the feather is described and we hear how it is put inside the speaker's breast, and that he forgets "the rest," there is no explanation, — no application of the simile to the particular instance of the meeting with Shelley. Is any needed? Is this a peculiarly vivid and strong way of using imagery; or do you think it obscure?

In "Popularity" the main image used is that of the fisher who has brought to land a netful of the shells which secreted the famous Tyrian dye. This symbol for the poet whose originality of genius has brought the world an infinitely expansible product that can lend beauty and value everywhere, is unfolded in new relations with the idea throughout nine of the thirteen stanzas. Notice that no direct reference is made to the subject of the comparison till the last words are reached; and yet how the significance grows, and how the reader's intelligence is made ready to catch the full force of the allusion to Keats when it does come. Notice, especially, the beauty of the picture of the whelks with the charm of the sea-wet still on them, in the eighth stanza; and of

the contrast of that picture with the splendor of the gold-robed king amid his Tyrian-blue hangings, in the next stanza ; and of that again with the picture in the tenth stanza of the gold and blue flower whose beauty the bee is drunken with. Do you think the grotesque quality of the Tyrian dye imagery in the final stanzas, by contrast with the beauty of that of the earlier stanzas, is too rough ? Or is the rudeness of the application to Hobbs *et al.* suitably indicative of the disdain the Keats enthusiast who is speaking feels for the thrifty copyists, and therefore as much in keeping with the plan of the poem as the magical sea-touch is in the working up of the image as to the originality of Keats in the eighth stanza ? Point out the meaning of the metaphors employed in the second and third stanzas. The poet whose light is a star to the one who knew his worth from the first, is conceived of as to God a glow-worm ; and God is imagined as holding him guardingly in his hand, as one might hold a glow-worm out in his hand, keeping it safe there and letting out its light at need to show the way in the dark world. There is a contrast drawn also between the originality of the poet who holds the future through the present (lines 13-15), and the imitativeness of the writers who paint the future from the past (line 59) instead of from the present, as Keats did.

Both "Popularity" and "Memorabilia" are written in iambic, four-stressed verse arranged in short and simple stanzas, alternately rhymed. What differences are there in the stanza form in the two poems ? Do double rhymes occur ? In which is the stress changed the oftener so as to fall upon the first syllable of the foot ? Where do you put the stress in line

11 of "Memorabilia," and lines 18, 20, and 55 of "Popularity"?

"Transcendentalism," which is written in blank verse like "Pauline," having the same number of stresses to the line and being without rhyme, has quite a different effect as regards metre, has it not? How do you account for that? And why is it that "How it Strikes a Contemporary" impresses you at once as belonging to the same class with "Transcendentalism" as to metre and poetic manner? How are the metaphors of the harp as opposed to the horn, the flowers with tongues, to the "sudden rose itself" employed to bring out the central idea of the poem?

Are there very few similes in the poem? And aside from the symbol of the king suggesting a mightier King, is there any symbolism fitting and making known the central idea, as in "Memorabilia," "Popularity," and "Transcendentalism"? What is there in the composition of the poem to account for this poetic baldness? Is there any reason why it is appropriate?

"At the 'Mermaid'" is distinguished in metre from the other poems of the Shakespearian group, — all of which have a four-stressed line, — not merely by its different stanza form, — and notice that this is different in each poem, — but also by its steadily trochaic foot. The trochaic beat is kept up with almost no exceptions. Do you find any? To do this without wrenching the accents, and so driving sense-emphasis and metrical emphasis at the same pace, makes an effect of an imperturbable speaker, one who is both self-poised and powerful; or do you derive from the poem an impression of this sort? In what lines do you find the normal measure humored a little? Notice,

with this query in mind, lines 28, 41, 58, and ask if these are any of them lines where elision or repetition of a word causes an external unevenness which the sense-emphasis, because of its internal influence, rightly cures? Notice the rhymes and double rhymes occurring in the Shakespearian group. Are there more departures from the normal iambic metre of "Shop" and the anapæstic of "House" than in "At the 'Mermaid'" from its trochaic metre? The metaphors used throughout "At the 'Mermaid'" are various and unusual. Notice what these are: for example, *sowing* song-sedition; *blown* up by ambition, and *bubble*-king, etc.; *breeding* insight; use to pay *its Lord* my duty, as applied to Shakespeare's religion, and use to own *a lord*, as applied to his respect for title and rank, which are favorite topics of dispute; *largess*; *gold*, *brass*, and *orichalc*, the first representing an idealistic view, the second a derogatory one, the third a rational seeing of things as mixed of good and evil; *threw Venus*, etc. (For allusions, see *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, Vol. IX., p. 298.) Are they appropriate to the speaker?

The German phrase "Weltschmerz" (line 132) seems decidedly inappropriate. Is it a modern expression, and not likely to have been used in the Elizabethan period? Are the Bible references, "Balaam-like" (line 92), and the quotation from the Gospels — Matthew xv. 17, Mark vii. 19 (lines 135 and 136) — in keeping with Shakespeare's diction as we know it in the Plays? Notice the final hit at Jonson (lines 143 and 144), who was reputed to be envious of Shakespeare, and who did succeed Daniel in the laureateship.

In "House" and "Shop" metaphors of so many

kinds are not used. Instead there is a continuous symbolism carried on throughout each poem. All the figures used in the one poem suit the "house" comparison, as in the other they suit the "shop" comparison. Point these out, and show how they are applied in each of these poems. Sometimes there is a double appropriateness in these comparisons, as in the suggestion of the shop-keeper's studying the *Times*, as if it were not merely intended to bring up the picture of the man reading the newspaper while he swept the money in his cash drawer, but also to recall Shakespeare's phrase in "Hamlet" of the study of the dramatist being to show forth "the body of the time its form and pressure." Instance others having this double reference to Shakespeare. Why should there be this difference in the way the imagery is employed in "At the Mermaid" and in the two following poems? Is there a reason for it? And what do you think it is? Notice that this mode of using an image in all its ins and outs to symbolize the leading idea is like that followed in "Memorabilia" and "Popularity," while "At the 'Mermaid'" and "How it Strikes a Contemporary" are more alike in using another mode, and yet that they differ in using in the one case a great deal of imagery and in the other only a bare simile or so. Why? Does each suit its speaker?

Trace out the application of the figure to the idea as it is put first in the mouth of the first speaker in "Touch him ne'er so lightly," and, then, in the rejoinder giving a different point of view. Is the same measure kept up in the Album Lines? Does the same metaphor recur in these Album Lines, and how is it adapted now to suit still a third purpose?

The lyric from "Ferishtah" is not adorned with

either metaphors or symbolism. What sort of charm has it? Merely the grace of well-adjusted rhythm and rhyme?

“Poetics,” like this lyric, has five-stressed lines alternately rhymed, but without the double-rhymed couplet which concludes each stanza of the lyric. But “Poetics” is like “Touch him ne’er so lightly” in using the same metaphors in different ways to suit the expression of two different speakers regarding poetics. Do you also find the poem as a whole symbolic of the larger meaning, suggested in the second part of this programme, that the poet’s poetics depend upon humanizing his metaphors?

How do “Goldoni” and “The Names” compare as sonnets with the earlier sonnet by Browning, “Eyes, calm beside thee”? (For articles showing the different sonnet forms in use, see E. B. Brownlow’s “Wyatt’s Sonnets and their Sources,” and “Curiosities in Sonnet Literature,” *Poet-lore*, Vol. III., pp. 127 and 545, March and November, 1891.)

*Queries for Discussion.* — Is Browning dramatic both in artistic form and in conception, even when he is giving forth specific truths with relation to poetic art?

But if it be granted that he presents different points of view, can it be claimed that he does not show his preference for a special point of view as regards the poet and poetic art?

Does he present the purely lyrical art of the subjective poet as fairly as the more objective art of the dramatic poet?



## EVOLUTION OF RELIGION

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I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
 —The Subject-Matter and Characterization.

*Hints:* — Sketches of the subject-matter of the poems may be found in the Notes to the *Camberwell Browning*, as given above. By following these through in connection with the poems, Browning's manner of presenting his themes may be seen in greater relief.

In "Caliban" we have the untutored thoughts of an undeveloped savage about God. Is he like Shakespeare's Caliban in the possession of considerable intelligence and an appreciation of natural beauty? Notice the peculiarity of the verb in the third person without any pronoun, which Caliban almost always uses when speaking of himself. This peculiarity is characteristic of language in a low stage of develop-

ment, when distinction between first, second, and third person is either vague or entirely lacking. Where does he represent himself as lying in the first stanza, and what little events in nature does he describe as taking place around him? Why does he think it will be safer for him to talk about God now than in the winter, and who does he mean would be vexed if he heard him, — Prosper or God? What dwelling does he assign to Setebos, and of what does he make him the creator? Is it true to life that a savage should regard the moon as cold, or is that a fact known only to modern science? Notice the logicalness with which he gives a reason for his proposition in regard to Setebos. What are his reasons, and with what poetical simile does he illustrate? Going on to give further particulars as to the creations of Setebos, what further reason does he give for the creative activity of Setebos, and what argument does he use to show that he could not have made things on any other account? Notice the illustration he uses, putting himself in the place of the capricious creator, and what conclusion he comes to. What further step does Caliban take in the next stanza as to what the capriciousness of Setebos shows, and what illustration does he use to clinch his argument? What modification does he make in the character already given Setebos, and what quality does he add, and how does his illustration resemble the previous ones?

Having decided that Setebos is rough and ill at ease, with his inquiring nature Caliban must have a reason for it. To account for this he has to imagine a cause behind Setebos. Is he quite clear as to its being a cause or an effect? What are the characteristics of the "Quiet"? And how does he illustrate by his

own feelings? Is his feeling in regard to the quails quite consistent with his pleasure in making and mar-ring clay, or does it show a little glimpse of aspiration in his nature not before observable? He immediately decides that he is more interested in Setebos than in the "Quiet." What new idea does Caliban add in the second statement just following of the reason for Setebos creating the world, and how does he illustrate out of his own experience? What difference of opinion was there between Caliban and his dam about Setebos and the "Quiet," and what further reason does Caliban give to prove that he is right in attributing creation to Setebos? What are Caliban's conclusions in regard to the supposition that Setebos may like what profits him? Notice again his illustrations from his own experience. What examples of the wantonness of Setebos does he give in the next stanza, and what does he conclude as to the way to please him? What is the only hope that things will ever change, and what other point of disagreement between Caliban and his dam is brought out? How does Caliban think he would best order his life to escape the ire of Setebos? What happens now in the midst of Caliban's theologizing, and how does it affect him?

In "Cleon" we follow Cleon's thoughts as he writes a letter to Protus in answer to one received from him with generous gifts. The opening lines of the poem are the greeting of the letter, after which Cleon goes on to speak of the gifts he has received. Notice how he does not enumerate them, but with a few powerful strokes portrays the scene of the unlading of the galley. Not only do we get an idea of the richness of the gifts sent, but we also receive a definite impression of the dwelling-place of Cleon.

What do you gather from the next stanza in regard to the character of Protus? What do we learn of Cleon himself in the next stanza in his answer to Protus that all he has heard of him is true? Notice that Cleon is a universal artist, and how he argues that a universal composite mind such as his is greater than the mind of the specialist. To a judge who only sees one way at once, the composite mind does not look so great as the mind of the past great in one thing. Then he shows how life is like a huge mosaic, every man being a figure in the pattern, and that progress is not the blotting out of what has gone before, but the combining of all the parts into a perfect picture. The divine men of old had each reached at some one point the outmost verge of man's faculties, and who can ever reach farther than they did in any one direction? Show the appropriateness of the illustration of the sphere. What fiction does Cleon say he once wrote out in his desire to vindicate the purpose of Zeus in man's life, — a thing which his soul cried out to Zeus to know? But though this is a dream, what does he say is not a dream? And since all material things progress, can it be possible, he asks, that the soul deteriorates? How does he make himself stand as a proof that the soul does not deteriorate? Does he show modesty or egotism in this instancing of himself as an example of soul-progress? In the next stanza what do we learn in regard to Protus's attitude toward death, and what he thinks Cleon's must be? Before answering this question he goes off on a long course of reasoning. Does he decide that admiration grows with knowledge, or does he seem to think it debatable? What case does he suppose in order to present his argument more

forcibly? Notice the contrast he draws between nature outside of man and man. Instead, however, of asking Zeus to add to man the quality of being able to realize and understand the joy and beauty of life, what does he think might more reasonably have been asked? And why does the possession of consciousness seem so horrible to him? How does Cleon prove to himself that Zeus, in spite of this awful failure of the flesh to attain to the heights of joy seen by the soul, has not created man to suffer simply for his own delight? Still, is there any sign to show that Zeus cares? And so what is the final dismal conclusion as to progress?

In answer to the supposition of Protus that Cleon in his art-works finds joy and will gain immortality, what question does he put to the King, and how does he illustrate the fact that an accurate view of joy is not the same as feeling joy? Is the thought that his work lives any consolation to him? How does he feel that death is even doubly horrible to him? What does he dare imagine at times to be his need? What hint of Cleon's attitude to Christianity is given in the last stanza, and to whom does it appear that Protus wished to send a letter if he could find from Cleon where it should be delivered?

Sum up now in a few words the conception of God held by Caliban and that held by Cleon.

In "Saul," the poet David is speaking. How does he say Abner greeted him? Through this greeting do we learn what the mission of David is? How does David describe Saul's appearance? Notice the order in which David plays his tunes, beginning with those appealing to the love of nature and ending with what? Note the effect upon Saul.

David sings again, stanza iv. now, and instead of merely telling about the tunes he played, he quotes the words of the song. What does he celebrate in this song, and how is Saul affected? Note the beauty of David's description of Saul's partial response to his music, David's growing desire to make the proper appeal to the King, and his attempt in the next song.

Still, though the King is pleased by the immortality of deed promised him in this, the "sign" of his cure is yet lacking. In this scene David's love for Saul reaches its climax, and in what does this result? Notice that he drops his harp and song here, changes from the poet to the prophet. It is to be observed, also, that, although the truth comes upon him with the force of a revelation, he yet supplements it with his own reasoning powers. Show in what way he does this. Does Browning's portraiture of David as a poet, thinker, and prophet, agree with the impression we get of him from the Bible?

Notice the contrast between the attitude of Cleon and Ben Ezra. Although the Hebrew considers age the best, what does he feel about the hopes and fears of youth? He does not remonstrate on account of them, but prizes them. Notice the poetical imagery of the second stanza. In saying (iv.) that it were a poor vaunt of life were man but made to feed on joy, he is again opposed to Cleon. What does he rejoice over and welcome, and what comforts him? Failure, so horrible to Cleon, is a joy to Ben Ezra. What does he recognize with Cleon is the distinction between man and brute? Do they not equally recognize the inadequateness of the flesh to keep pace with the soul? Just as after declaring old age superior he then proceeds to show the need and use of youth as a



complement, so after declaring the superiority of the soul Ezra proceeds to show the use and need of the flesh. The beauty of all material things appears to him, and he is filled with the goodness of life and praise for its Creator. Whatever failure may appear in the flesh, he has faith that the maker will sometime remake complete.

Does he indicate in the next two stanzas a desire that the remaking complete will be to raise the flesh so that it will be as equal to the soul's needs as the brutes' is to theirs, since, pleasant as the flesh is now, the soul always yearns for rest? He hopes that we may not always say that progress is in spite of flesh, but that flesh helps soul as soul helps flesh.

In xiii. he returns to the first thought of welcoming age. Show how he enlarges upon the idea, and what he considers are all the advantages of old age, and what is best suited to youth in contrast with old age up to stanza xxiii.

What does he decide (xxiii.) are the important things in life? (xxvi.) Enlarging upon the simile of the potter's wheel, what ideas does he evolve from it about the permanence of truth? Explain the force of the imagery in xxix. (xxx.) The imagery in this stanza is somewhat obscure, but life having already been compared to a vase or cup, Ben Ezra means by this imagery that the uses of life to God are the important things to be considered, that our lives are the cup for the festive board of the Lord. When the cup is finally complete, what need to think of the stress of earth's wheel? What is the concluding thought of the poem?

"An Epistle" is a companion picture to "Cleon," presenting in a letter the attitude of a learned Arab

toward the great fact of that time. He introduces himself and the person to whom he is writing in the greeting of the letter. How much do you learn of both in this preliminary greeting? Note, in the next paragraph, how he begins his letter by talking of anything and everything but the one thing he really wants to talk about. Who do we learn is to carry the letter? In the next paragraph his anxiety to tell his experience gets the better of his reluctance. Can you guess what are the causes of his reluctance to tell? Observe the off-hand way in which he begins to tell the story. Does he betray his deep interest in it as he goes on? Is it the fact of the cure that impresses him most, or the effect of the cure upon Lazarus's mind?

How does he describe Lazarus and his manner of looking at life? Is it this which makes Karshish think the cure of a different nature from those he has been used to in his medical experience?

Is the difficulty with Lazarus that, in his larger view of life, he has given up the exercise of human initiative and has become a sort of fatalist?

Notice the Arab's apologetic manner when telling what Lazarus says of the Nazarene who cured him; his attempt to dismiss it as a trivial matter, while he turns to things of more moment like the blue-flowering borage; his return to the subject again in spite of himself, and his evident wish that such a story might be true.

Notice the differences between the learning of Cleon and that of Karshish. Which seems to have the more need of a new religion, and which seems to be more deeply sceptical?

What do you learn from the first stanza of "A

Death in the Desert'' as to the nature and form of the communication which the speaker in the poem is to make? In the next eight paragraphs what scene is vividly portrayed by Pamphylax in his parchment? Is there anything so far to indicate whose death-bed is being described? Has sufficient of the personality of the dying man been revealed to make the stanzas following intelligible? Explain how he describes himself to be so withdrawn into his depths that his consciousness of his own or others' personality is dimmed and he could believe those about him to be James and Peter, or even John himself. How does the speaker of the poem expound the doctrine of the dying man in regard to the soul, and how does this explain his feelings as he describes them in the preceding stanza?

With what image does he further explain his sensations in the next stanza, and how does he reveal who he really is? What doubt suggests itself to him, and what account of his past life does he give in the next two stanzas? What idea do we receive of his age and of his influence as long as he is alive? Sum up the arguments used by him in the next stanza as assurance for those unborn generations who have not themselves seen or heard, and who he feels will have doubts of the truth. Are the arguments in the nature of proof, or are they simply an expression of his own overwhelming sense of the truth of what he has seen and heard?

Is the main thought to be gained from the following stanza that the realization of divine love is the most important need of man, and that just how it was revealed to man is not so important as the fact that it has been revealed in some way?

In the next stanza is there any force in his argument as a proof of the truth of what he has seen, or is it rather a reiteration of the fact that he is sure of it himself? What arguments of the doubter does John next present, and how does he meet them? The first argument he presents he calls the Pagan's teaching. How does he modify it in the next following stanza? Point out the essential difference in the two arguments, and also the points of resemblance. In the next stanza what reasons does he give for the weakness of what he calls the Pagan's teaching? What further questionings of the doubter does he then present?

Sum up his final arguments. Does he not allow some good in a Pagan's way of arriving at the truth — that is, a yearning for it until he crystallizes it into a set form which is an image at least of the truth? What are the few remaining stanzas (except the last) taken up with? What is meant in the last stanza by Cerinthus being lost? What other passage in the poem throws light on the attitude of Cerinthus? From his whole course of argument do you get the impression that John's belief rests upon faith and not upon reason?

How is the scene of the poem presented in the first stanza of "Bishop Blougram"? Notice how the Bishop next touches off what he supposes to be the attitude of Gigadibs towards him in his social capacity. Is this a true reading of Gigadibs's character, or is the Bishop so used to having court paid to him that he takes it for granted a poor literary man will feel honored by his attentions? Through the Bishop's talk, what sort of criticism do we learn Gigadibs had been making?

What do you think of the Bishop's ideal of taking

things as we find them and making them as fair as possible, in comparison with Gigadibs's, of forming an ideal of life which we try to realize? (See lines 86-99.) Does the simile which the Bishop brings forward to illustrate the two ideals do justice to Gigadibs's, considering that the Bishop, by following his ideal, could surround himself with just such treasures as he uses to point his argument against Gigadibs, while Gigadibs, in following his ideal, would be likely to have little material comfort of any sort? What do you think of the Bishop's argument that one cannot stay fixed in unbelief any more than he can in belief? Notice his remark to the effect that one feels round to find *some sense* in which accepted beliefs may be the "Way, the Truth, the Life." Having proved to his satisfaction that one must either have a life of doubt diversified by faith or of faith diversified by doubt, what utilitarian reasons does he give for himself preferring the former? Since he can get what he best likes this way, and cannot get it without announcing to the world his unequivocal belief, he turns his belief side toward the world and keeps his doubts to himself. He next proceeds to show why, having reached this conviction, he chose the most absolute form of faith. How does his utilitarianism assert itself here?

Does Gigadibs appear to be impressed with the weight of the Bishop's arguments? How would the Bishop defend himself, suppose he were to admit Gigadibs's implications that he is a beast? Is his argument here sound, or has it a touch of sophistry? It is equivalent to saying, "God has made me selfish, comfort-loving, and power-loving, therefore I will make myself as much stronger in these ways as I can." However, he is n't going to admit himself so

low, and answering to the objection that the world will think him either a fool or a knave, what further utilitarian argument does he bring forth ?

As Gigadibs still refuses to admire him, he wants to know if he would like him to be a Napoleon or a Shakespeare. Are his reasons for not attempting any such ideals thoroughly in character ?

What does Blougram reply to Gigadibs's objection that such imperfect faith cannot accomplish faith's work any better than unbelief ?

Does Blougram's reply (line 600) seem to mean that the existence of doubt gives the human will a chance to choose between faith and doubt, and the more doubts one has, the more praiseworthy it is to will to keep oneself in an attitude of faith ?

Do you agree with Blougram that belief can be a matter of will ? Or must it be a matter of conviction ?

What do you think of Blougram's argument that creation is meant to hide God all it can ? In saying that with him faith means perpetual unbelief, he implies that belief and faith are not correlative terms, but the very preservation of faith depends upon unbelief, because its value consists in its being held to in the face of all odds. Notice his various illustrations of this point.

What has the Bishop to say to the objection of Gigadibs, that he views life narrowly and grossly ? Do you agree with his argument, that when you are living in the world you may as well take all the world has to offer and be worldly ? Gigadibs still holds out that it would be better frankly to confess his attitude toward the world. And here the Bishop pounces on him. Is his (Gigadibs's) basis of ethical conduct upon any more truthful basis than the Bishop's faith ?



He finally rounds out his argument by showing that he has more worldly gains to show in his life than Gigadibs will ever have, which proves his way the best. The Bishop admits that there is one sort of life which would be better than his; what is it?

What practical effect does the Bishop's talk have on Gigadibs? Point out the false steps in the Bishop's argument. Is whatever he says of good rendered false by his constantly proving his points on the basis of their practical, material advantage to himself?

If Gigadibs had been as subtle in argument as the Bishop, could he have beaten him?

For further suggestions on "Christmas-Eve" and "Easter-Day" than those given in the Notes, see Introduction to Vol. IV. *Camberwell Browning*. Follow carefully the thought-moods as sketched in the abstract of these two poems, and notice the forms of expression in which they are clothed as indicated in the Introduction. Contrast the attitude of mind of such a character as the speaker in this poem with that of Blougram's, — the one who is religious because he deliberately chooses religion as the most expedient scheme of life, the other whose whole soul is filled with religious aspiration, — the one whose doubts revolve about orthodox creeds, the other who realizes that the truth or falsity of orthodox creeds does not affect the essential truths of religion, namely, that God is Love and Power, revealable to every human soul directly, through its recognition of power in the universe and of love in its own heart. There would have been room in this man's theology for a Bishop Blougram, would there not? The Bishop's special way of holding on to faith was probably the only way in which he could catch even a glimpse of the eternal

verities of religion, just as the Dissenters had their way of praising God.

*Queries for Discussion.* — How many of the characters in these poems are drawn from actual life?

How many of the poems may be said to have sources, and how many of them are purely imaginary?

Dr. Charles G. Ames, writing upon "Caliban" in the published volume of "Boston Browning Society Papers," says:—

"Three things I get directly from the poem: (1) It is a satire upon all who plant themselves upon the narrow island of individualism and think to reach completeness of character and culture without sharing the common life of the world. (2) It is a protest against the vagaries of the understanding, divorced from the deeper reason and the moral sense: . . . (3) But chiefly, I think, the poet means it as a satire upon all religious theories which construct a divinity out of the imperfections of humanity, instead of submitting humanity to be inspired and moulded by the perfections of divinity."

Do you think Browning had any such didactic purpose in writing this poem, or that he merely desired to present graphically a low phase of religious aspiration?

Does this prevent one from drawing any moral lesson at all from the poem?

Do you draw the same lessons or different ones from those suggested by Mr. Ames?

Is the portraiture of John in agreement with his personality as derivable from the New Testament?

On this point Mrs. M. G. Glazebrook says, in her paper on "A Death in the Desert" in the published volume of "Browning Studies":—

“ We have again the loved and loving disciple who leant on his Master’s breast at supper, and in his old age continually bade his ‘little children, love one another.’ He is learned in Greek philosophy and speculative, as the author of the Gospel called by his name must have been ; mystical and visionary as became him who had received the revelation of Patmos. He is full of the responsibility which rests upon him as the last survivor of those who had seen and known Christ ; fearful, also, of the heresies and ‘ Anti-Christ’s ’ already beginning to disturb the Church, of whom the Ebionites, or followers of Cerinthus, who denied his Lord’s divinity, give him cause for most anxiety.”

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
—Phases of Religious Thought Illustrated in these Poems.

*Hints :* — Each one of these poems may be regarded as marking an especial phase of religious development. Beginning with Caliban, who stands for the natural, uncultured reasoning of the savage, “ Saul ” next gives the essence of the prophetic period of Jewish religious development. In Cleon we have the cultured, intellectual reasoning of a Greek at a time when any inspiration the Greek religion ever had has been dissipated in the light of cold reason, yet there is present the same religious yearning as there is in David. “ An Epistle ” gives still another view, that of an Arab confronted with the problem of the new revealed religion.

“ A Death in the Desert ” gives the reminiscent mood of the man who was actually a contemporary of the event prophesied by David. Rabbi Ben Ezra gives that of a Jew of later date. In “ Bishop Blougram ” and “ Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day ” we

come down to religious reasoning of the nineteenth century.

Give an account of the attributes of Setebos as conceived by Caliban. Show how Caliban's conception is a mingling of his observations of the processes of nature and his own interpretations of these processes. Had he observed in nature any other qualities than those of capriciousness and cruelty? Is his interpretation colored by the treatment he has received from Prospero? Notice how his illustrations are all drawn from his own experience.

Why do you suppose he thought the stars were not made by Setebos? Perhaps because they seemed to him to be beyond the reach of that god's capriciousness. Is his notion that above Setebos reigns another God, the Quiet, indicative of aspiration, though of a very rude sort, in Caliban's nature?

Is there any trace of love in Caliban's reasoning? Had he experienced any love in his life? Setebos is a god of power only, but is he a god of Omnipotent power? Notice that Caliban is not quite sure whether he was made by the Quiet or whether he conquered the Quiet. Does this suggest to your mind the Greek myth of Saturn and Jupiter?

Is there any suggestion of an embryonic problem of evil in Caliban's mind? (See line 170 fol.) Caliban's solution of the existence of evil is that Setebos does all for his own amusement. Should you say, on the whole, that Caliban is a little better than the god he imagines? If so, how does he show it? What is his opinion about an after-life? Having discovered just what Caliban's religious conceptions are, it will be interesting to show how close they are to a true savage religion.

Mr. Arthur Symonds says, in speaking of this poem : "I think Mr. Huxley has said that the poem is a truly scientific representation of the development of religious ideas in primitive man." Unfortunately scholars are not all agreed as to the exact nature of primitive religious ideas, some contending that fear played a large part in the origin of religion, others that love was the root of religious aspiration, and others that religion originated in ancestor worship. There are still other theories to be considered, and if it be desired to go into the matter thoroughly, the following books may be consulted: Fiske's "Myths and Myth-Makers," chapter on "The Primeval Ghost World;" also his "Idea of God;" Tylor's "Primitive Culture;" Max Müller's Essays on "The Science of Religion," in "Chips from a German Workshop" and "Contributions to the Science of Mythology;" Andrew Lang's "Custom and Myth" and "Myth, Ritual and Religion;" Dr. D. G. Brinton's "Religions of Primitive Peoples."

It may be said that Caliban's theology fits in best with the assumption that savage religion began with ancestor worship mingled with the emotion of fear, from which would finally come the god who made all things. Having arrived at that stage, it is easy to imagine a thinking savage wondering why his god treated his creations in the way he did, and then drawing conclusions as to his nature.

Turning to "Saul," what do you find are the chief characteristics of David's religious conceptions? He has discovered a god in nature, just as Caliban did; how do his conceptions of this god in nature differ from those of Caliban? How does his conception of God become enlarged? Is this enlarged con-

ception a reflection of his own nature, just as Caliban's was a reflection of his? David, however, is conscious that in loving more than he had supposed God loved, he is putting himself above God, and so the truth breaks in upon him that God's love must be greater than his, a mere man's, and that, being all-powerful, he can accomplish what he (David) can only aspire to do. Is there anything in the poem to indicate that David's prophecy was the result of a supernatural revelation, or does it seem to be the natural unfolding of God's spirit within David so that he sees far ahead of other men? For light upon Browning's truthfulness in the portraiture of this period of religious aspiration, see Darmesteter's "Selected Essays," trans. by Helen B. Jastrow, and the Essay on "Saul" in J. T. Nittleship's "Robert Browning: Essays and Thoughts."

In Cleon the crude observation and sensations of the savage have given place to the cultured observation and sensations of the Greek. He has advanced far beyond that stage where his God is a reflection of himself. Zeus is really a survival from a more savage age, which fails to come up to the requirements of Cleon. Thence his great disquietude, and his reaching out toward a conception of God that includes the idea of love and care. But while Caliban bases his reasoning on merely personal experiences, Cleon bases his not only upon his own experiences, but upon the sympathy which he feels with others. Aware of the existence of love in himself and others, he longs for some sign that love is the ruling quality of the Divine mind. The sign of this love would be the assurance that joy such as the soul sees might one day be in truth experienced, and that the progress of



the soul, which is the distinctive mark of man as separated from the brute, is not to end in nothing.

Do you agree with Cleon that the sympathetic mind which enters into sympathy with all forms of art and reaches a high point, if not the highest in the creation of all, is a more developed mind than that which is specially developed in one direction and thereby reaches the highest point? Do you think that the highest enjoyment comes from direct experience or active participation, or from entering into sympathy with the experience of others? Can sympathy be entire without a personal knowledge of the same thing? For example, is one happier playing the piano himself, even if he does it only moderately well, or listening to a great performer? Or can one really enjoy great playing if he has not tried to do the same thing himself? Which is the ideal of Cleon?

Notice that Saul and Cleon both want the same assurance, that of personal immortality. Has Cleon any notion of evolution? Do you agree with him that new things do not blot out the old, but that all persist to form at last a completed whole? Notice that Cleon rejects just the sort of manifestation from the infinite that he longs for. Why do you suppose that is? Because he listens only to the dictates of his intellect, and not at all to the dictates of his heart? Does Browning's Cleon truly portray Greek thought at the time of Christ? (For information on this point, see Zeller's "A History of Eclecticism in Greek Philosophy," Lewes's "History of Philosophy," Vol. I., Eighth and Ninth Epochs.)

In "A Death in the Desert" the God of love is made manifest. Against all supposable doubts John holds firm ground, yet he is very liberal in his

attitude toward those who have had aspirations leading to truth. Observe how John sketches the stages of religious belief in the passage beginning, "first, like a brute obliged by facts to learn," like Caliban; next, as "man may, obliged by his own mind," like Cleon. But even such reasoners about God as Caliban and Cleon do it through the gift of God, — note passage following. And all this is "midway help" till the fact be reached indeed through the divine incarnation. He accepts the fact of man's anthropomorphic conceptions of God, and declares that they have glimmers of truth, but that in Christ we have the truth indeed; no subjective conception emanating from the mind of man, but an objective truth.

What do you think of John's theory of the miracles? Is his ground very strong, or does it leave a loop-hole for a natural instead of a supernatural explanation of them? What is the theory of life to be deduced from this poem? Mrs. Glazebrook thus sums it up: "Man's life consists in never ceasing progress. The god-like power is imparted to him gradually, and step by step he approaches nearer to absolute truth — to divine perfection. But in this mortal life the goal can never be attained: the ideal which he strives to realize here, exists only in heaven, and awaits him as a reward of all his faithful efforts. For, should he cease to strive, and renounce the divine ideals, he forfeits his right to life, and brings upon himself the condemnation of death." What relation to John's theories of life has his belief in regard to the relations of the body, mind, and soul? Upon this point Professor Corson writes, in his "Introduction to the Study of Browning": "The doctrine of the trinal unity of man (the what Does, what

Knows, what Is) ascribed to John (lines 82-104) and upon which his discourse may be said to proceed, leads up to the presentation of the final stage of the Christian life on earth—that stage when man has won his way to the Kingdom of the ‘what Is’ within himself, and when he no longer needs the outward supports to his faith which he needed before he passed from the ‘what Knows.’ Christianity is a religion which is only secondarily a doctrine addressed to the ‘what Knows.’ It is first of all a religion whose fountain-head is a Personality in whom all that is spiritually potential in man was realized, and in responding to whom the soul of man is quickened and regenerated.” Would such a theory of life as this have been possible to John, or is it very suggestive of nineteenth-century philosophy? This poem was written with a view to answering the attacks made upon the historical bases of Christianity by such men as Strauss and Renan. To quote Mrs. Glazebrook again, “In the critical examination of the evangelical records, the Fourth Gospel suffered most. . . . Strauss pronounced it to be a controversial work, written late in the second century after Christ, by a profound theologian of the Greek Gnostic and anti-Jewish school, whose design was not to add another to the existing biographies of Christ, not to represent him as a real man, nor to give an account of any human life, but to produce an elaborate theological work in which, under the veil of allegory, the Neo-platonic conception of Christ as the Logos, the realized Word of God, the divine principle of light and life should be developed.” If it be desired to pursue these investigations further, see Renan’s “Life of Christ,” and Strauss’s “Life

of Christ" which has been translated by George Eliot; also Mrs. Glazebrook's article on "A Death in the Desert" in "Browning Studies."

In "An Epistle" is there any definite presentation of a conception of God? There is depicted rather the effect on character of a glimpse of life from the divine standpoint. According to Karshish, the effect has not been altogether good upon Lazarus. Is that because an infinite view of life showing how all works together for good, confuses a finite intelligence, so that he is no longer able to direct his will toward working for any positive ideal, but leaves himself too much in the hands of God and is guided therefore by emotions? On the other hand, perhaps Karshish did not rightly interpret the character of Lazarus, because his own mind was biassed by a too confined and narrow view of life. Which do you think more likely? It will be interesting here to compare what the poet says, evidently in his own person, in "Two Poets of Croisic" (lines 464-528).

How does the attitude of Karshish differ from that of Cleon? Should you say that he was not as conscious as Cleon of the need of a new revelation in religion, yet that he could more easily be convinced of its truth?

Of what race were the Arabs, and what was their religion at that time? Were they distinguished for their scientific attainments, as the poem indicates? (For information on these topics, see "Encyclopædia Britannica," article "Arabia.")

In "Rabbi Ben Ezra" we find that the Rabbi agrees with Cleon as to the progress of the human soul. But Cleon's progress is an intellectual progress, while Ezra's is a spiritual progress. While Cleon

longs for the enjoyment of the full development of self, Ezra longs for the full development of self only that he may give delight to his Creator. Where Cleon's aspirations make the failure to attain them seem a black horror, Ezra's aspirations fill him with hope. He belongs to the race that has full assurance of the existence of a God who watches over the affairs of men, but a God jealous of his own prerogatives. Is there much assurance of the love of God as Ezra conceives him? Is he not rather like a perfect architect who fashions men for his own glory, differing from Caliban's God mainly in the fact that, instead of enjoying the suffering which he causes mankind, he administers it with love as a means of perfecting man to grace the after time?

How truthful a representation of Jewish opinion is this poem? (For this see *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, p. 311.) Miss Mary M. Cohen, writing on "Browning's Hebraic Sympathies" (*Poet-lore*, Vol. III., pp. 250-254, May, 1891), says that in this poem "Browning has seized the essence of Jewish faith and hope, holding it aloft in the crystal of language. There is no doubt that the writer had drunk deeply at the well of Hebraic thought; not otherwise could he have composed verses which in their majestic music and their noble meaning seem to echo something of the solemn earnestness and inspiration of Isaiah or Job."

In "Bishop Blougram" we have reflected all the intellectual doubts of a cultured man of the nineteenth century, and a way of meeting them peculiar to a certain type of mind. Suppose belief is swept away as it was in the Bishop's case, is there anything against his argument, that it will be best for himself and humanity if he retain what was once his belief as

a living ideal, in the faith that it has a better chance of being the truth than an ideal based upon unbelief? But does not the Bishop utterly stultify himself by making the good he wishes to gain almost absolutely selfish and worldly, and also by posing to the world as a sincere and devout believer? The effect of unbelief in this century has been to send a good many intellectual men into the Church of Rome. Does Browning in this poem present truthfully the bases of their faith, at the same time that in Blougram he portrays a type of a worldly nature rather than that of a pious nature? Notice Cardinal Wiseman's criticism of the poem quoted in Notes, *Camberwell Browning*, p. 295. For comparison with Browning's treatment of the subject, see Ward's "The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman," chap. xxiii.; Wiseman's "Lectures on Science and Revealed Religion."

In "Christmas-Eve" the religious attitude is given of a man who sees that the truth of religion is not in outward forms or dogmas, which vary according to the needs of different individuals, but that it is in the fundamental aspiration of every soul toward God. What does the speaker give as the basis of his own individual faith? Should you say that his belief was dependent upon the acceptance of historical Christianity, or does he use some of its dogmas as symbols of the highest possible conceptions in religion? Is he right in insisting that he cannot express truth for any one but himself?

In "Easter-Day" the difficulties of living a Christian life are discussed. What are these difficulties? What relation should this life have to an infinite beyond? Compare Bishop Blougram's ideals of living with the speaker's in this poem. Contrast



this poet's way of facing and answering doubts with the Bishop's. What is the difference in the nature of the doubts of a Cleon, the Bishop, and those expressed in "Easter-Day"? Do the ideals expressed in "Christmas-Eve" and "Easter-Day" appeal to you as being both rational and mystical, and full of deep religious conviction despite the doubts, not answered certainly with orthodox arguments?

*Queries for Discussion.* — It has been objected that Caliban's theology is not truly primitive, but might it be said that the intention of Browning is not so much to give an exact representation of savage ideas of God, as to show how the conception of God is colored by the experiences and observations of man in undeveloped stages of mind? Dr. Berdoe considers Caliban's theology to be much like that of Calvin (of whom an account may be found in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," Account of Calvin). Do you see the resemblances?

Writing upon this point in *Poet-lore* (Vol. III., p. 294, May, 1891), Dr. Hugh A. Clarke says: "These anthropomorphic conceptions of deity have, when presented in their native ugliness with the directness and incisiveness of this poem, so repellent an aspect that we feel compelled to repudiate them, for ourselves if not for our neighbors. But they are in some form or another so universal, and the faculty of seeing moles in each other's eyes being equally so, it is not to be wondered at that this poem has been used as a stone to throw, now at the Agnostic, now at the Calvinist, now at the Evangelical. That it hits every one at whom it is thrown is the best proof that the throwers would do well to examine their own domestic architecture to discover whether or

not there was an over-sufficiency of glass in its construction.”

Is the prophecy put into David's mouth, in “Saul,” more explicit than is warranted by the prophetic utterances attributed to the real David? See Psalms ii., viii., xiv., xxii., xl., xlv., lxviii., lxix., lxxxix., xci. Miss Cohen, in the article already cited, says: “I find the poet astonishingly correct, as a rule, in his grasp of the Hebraic nature. In but one poem does he seem to me to introduce a feature with which I can justly find fault; I mean the anachronism and unfitness of attaching the Trinitarian idea to such a distinctly Jewish poem as ‘Saul.’”

Do the conclusions of “A Death in the Desert” seem to you to form a strong argument against Strauss and Renan? Or does it seem to you that there is a certain begging of the question, not only on account of the fact that there are weak points in the argument, but because the poet has made the mouthpiece of his arguments John himself? Upon these points Mrs. Glazebrook remarks that “The tendency of the argument is to diminish the importance of the original events—historical or traditional—on which the Christian religion is based. ‘It is not worth while,’ the writer seems to say to Strauss and his followers, ‘to occupy ourselves with discussions about miracles and events, which are said to have taken place a long time ago, and can now neither be denied nor proved. What we are concerned with is Christianity as it is now: as a religion which the human mind has, through many generations, developed, purified, spiritualized; and which has reacted on human nature and made it wiser and nobler. . . . But it may in return very justly be asked if Mr. Browning can really intend to

advocate that something less than perfect truthfulness, which would be implied in the continued unquestioning acceptance of a dogmatic religion in its entirety, after the bases of many of its doctrines have been impugned. . . . All that we know of Mr. Browning's candour and keenness of perception forbids us to accept such a conclusion. But it is quite consistent with his customary method to have put the case against Strauss in this forcible, dramatic form. . . . His religious sense was revolted by the assumption that there was nothing in Christianity which could survive the destruction of the miraculous and supernatural elements in its history. He desired to represent Christianity as an entirely spiritual religion, independent of external, material agencies."

Are these poems all thoroughly dramatic in their presentation of religious thought, or are there certain resemblances of thought in them which show Browning's own bias toward a philosophy of evolution?

If they are not all entirely dramatic, which single poem would you instance as reflecting most nearly the poet's own standpoint?

Which do you consider presents the most developed point of view?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
Form and Ornamentation.

*Hints:* — All these poems are in monologue form, though they differ considerably in the manner of presentation. "Caliban," for example, gives directly the thoughts of the speaker, and only these, but without any explicit description of his life. An excellent idea of the way he spends his time is revealed by means of the illustrations which he uses. These illustrations, therefore, serve three purposes: to make

clear his thought, to give a glimpse of his way of living, and to show that his conception of Setebos is the result of his own experiences. In "Saul" the action is not present, as it is in "Caliban," but David gives a description of an event that has happened to him, telling what he himself had done and felt, what Abner had said, how Saul had looked, what he did, and so on, always using the indirect method of presenting the thought. In "Cleon" the action is present again; we follow him as he writes his letter to Protus, in the course of which we get not only Cleon's thoughts, but frequent glimpses of the thoughts of Protus by means of Cleon's answers, and furthermore, owing to the nature of the questions put by Protus, we get a complete view of Cleon's personality; again, by means of the illustrations introduced, we get a complete picture of the scene. Is there any word of direct description of the scene, or is it in every instance introduced as the accompaniment of a thought? "An Epistle" bears somewhat the same sort of relation to "Cleon," artistically, as "Saul" does to "Caliban." Although we follow Karshish as he writes his letter, the action is past instead of present, because he tells of an event that has happened to him. Do we learn as much about the personality of Karshish as we do about that of Cleon? Is any glimpse gained of the personality of Abib, to whom he is writing? Do we get as explicit a picture of the conditions under which the letter is being written as in "Cleon"? Of what present events is a view given?

In "A Death in the Desert" the speaker does not reveal himself at all; he is little more than the mouthpiece for the document of Pamphylax. The document gives an account of the scene of John's

death and of what he said on his death-bed. But there is the complexity so often seen in Browning's monologues, through John's imagining the arguments of the doubters, so that there are really two lines of thought carried on in the poem.

Notice that the little the speaker in the poem has to say is put in brackets. How much do his remarks bear upon the arguments of the poem? What Pamphylax says is printed direct, except when he is quoting his own past remarks. All that John says is quoted, all that his imagined opponents say is single quoted. Is there anything at all given of the occasion and surroundings of the speaker? What is given of the occasion of Pamphylax's relation of the story? Does the whole scene in the desert come out through the direct description of Pamphylax, or is some of it brought out in the course of John's talk? "Rabbi Ben Ezra" is the simplest of the monologues. It might be called a lyrical expression of the mood of the Rabbi, by means of which we discover his attitude toward life and God. Is there either action or scene portrayed, or any hint of any other personality? In "Blougram," again, a situation in the present is depicted. The Bishop does all the actual talking, but a clear idea of the remarks of Mr. Gigadibs may be gathered from the Bishop's replies to him. Is the manner of the poem more like "Cleon" than it is like that of any of the others under consideration? Point out the resemblances. "Christmas-Eve" comes under another head again. The speaker tells of an adventure he had, and of the visions he had in the midst of it. The scene, the visions, the thought, and the emotions are all presented by means of direct description, and the only direct actor in the poem is the

speaker, and all the action he tells about is past. "Easter-Day" is different again. There are two speakers in it, one talking directly, the other talking in quotation marks, so that, instead of getting the other personality through the answers of the speaker in the poem, as in "Blougram" and "Cleon," we get them by means of exact quotation of his remarks. To which of the other poems is it the nearest approach in form?

The structure of these poems does not offer any difficulties. "Caliban," "Cleon," "An Epistle," "A Death in the Desert," and "Blougram" are all in blank verse. Does this include all that are most dramatic in general treatment? In which of these is the blank verse most regular, and in which is it least regular? Does alliteration play any considerable part in the effect produced in these poems? Is tone gained chiefly by the character of the language rather than through the structure of the verse? In "Caliban," for example, the especial peculiarity of language is the use of the third person for the first. Now, while Caliban does not get a very satisfactory religious doctrine out of his observation of nature, he certainly makes his observations with acuteness, and expresses them in picturesque and vivid language. This might not seem fitting to a savage intellect, but an examination of savage myths will reveal the fact that savages were very acute observers of natural phenomena, that they clothed their observations in metaphorical and symbolic language which often attained great poetic beauty. As instances of this we may mention the Polynesian myth of "The Separation of Rangi and Papa" to be found in Tylor's "Primitive Culture," and the North American Indian tale of the "Red



Swan" given by Schoolcraft. Are Caliban's observations of nature true to natural history? For example, do fishes get frozen in wedges of ice and afterwards escape into the warm water, and do crabs march in a procession down to the sea? Naturally, Caliban uses no allusions that do not come within the immediate range of his observation. Does Shakespeare's Caliban use language equally remarkable for poetic beauty?

In "Cleon" the language everywhere suggests the life and culture of Greece. Observation of nature, pure and simple, is at a discount. Everything is refined upon, as the woman with the crocus vest that refines upon the women of Cleon's youth. Do you find any exception to the fact that his illustrations are drawn from the realm of man's artistic efforts? In his contrasting of animals with man, his observation is that of the scientist rather than that of the lover of nature, is it not? What does he say, however, to show that he has an appreciation of nature, though it is not his chief delight? His chief delight is the beauty of young and active manhood and beautiful womanhood. Is not the language of art and science combined with admiration of human beauty thoroughly characteristic of Grecian civilization, and does it not as surely give the tone to this poem as Caliban's nature illustrations do? Point out all the poetical comparisons used by Cleon, and show from what aspects of life he draws them. Is his language on the whole as full of images as Caliban's? Are the allusions all such as belong of necessity to his time? (For allusions, see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. V., Notes, p. 297.)

In "An Epistle" the references are nearly all strictly in line with the profession of Karshish, and so illustrative of the particular phase of medical science

practised at that time that they cannot be understood without special explanations. (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. V., Notes, p. 283.) Is the talk very full of images otherwise, or chiefly noticeable for its directness?

Notice that in "A Death in the Desert" references to secular learning of any kind are almost entirely absent. There are, however, references to Pagan religion. Point these out. Notice, also, that while much of the language is simple and direct, it breaks out now and then into some glowing gem of language like that in lines 204 and 205, —

"But shudderingly, scarce a shred between  
Lie bare to the universal prick of light."

Like Cleon, Blougram is a cultured man, but the things mentioned by Cleon are few in comparison with those mentioned by Blougram. His language is full of references to history, art, literature, ancient and modern. His remarks about himself show him to be surrounded with luxury, with feminine adoration, — to have unlimited power and influence, in fact. Aside from this richness of reference, observe the figures used, and compare the poem with Karshish and Cleon in this respect. (For allusions see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. V., Notes, p. 295.)

The remaining poems are all rhymed. "Saul" is in rhymed couplets, except at a few points in the poem, where there is a rhymed triplet introduced. The rhythm flows easily, with six beats to the line, the normal foot being anapæstic. Still greater ease is given by the fact that the stanzas vary in length, and frequently end with part of a line, the next stanza taking up the rest of the line and often completing the

rhymed couplet. "Rabbi Ben Ezra" has a more complicated stanza, — two rhymed couplets of three feet each, iambic, separated by a six-foot line that rhymes with a last seven-foot line. "Christmas-Eve" and "Easter-Day" have four beats to the line, with various arrangements of short syllables and rhymes, so that the effect of the verse is lively, and possibly not quite so dignified as the subject demands. What do you think? Whatever lack there may be in the structure of the verse is, however, counteracted by the diction and style, which passes from the humorous description full of lifelikeness of the congregation in the little chapel to the chaste reticence and power in the presentation of the vision.

If there are any differences in the internal structure of the verse, that is, in the varying of short syllables and rhymes to agree with the changes in mood, note them. "Easter-Day," Mr. Arthur Symonds says, "like its predecessor, is written in lines of four beats each, but the general effect is totally dissimilar. Here the verse is reduced to its barest constituents; every line is, syllabically as well as accentually, of equal length; and the lines run in pairs, without one double rhyme throughout. The tone and contents of the two poems (though also in a sense derived from the same elements) are in similar contrast. 'Easter-Day,' despite a momentary touch or glimmer, here and there, of grave humour, is thoroughly serious in manner and continuously solemn in subject." These poems differentiate themselves from all the others in this group, through their imaginative and symbolical quality. "Saul" toward the end touches the same sort of imaginative ecstasy (show how), but David's vision does not reach the vivid objective presentation of

those in the two later poems. There are many interesting allusions in the two poems, for explanation of which see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IV., Notes, pp. 400, 404. Contrast the way in which they are brought in with their use in the other poems.

A study of the effects of alliteration will be found interesting in connection with the rhymed group. In making comparisons notice that appreciation of nature is as much an attribute of David as it is of Caliban, but his appreciation smacks of pastoral rather than savage life, and includes human life in its vision, and furthermore is infused with the fervor of the joy of living instead of the fear of the joy of living. The chief ornaments of this poem are the lyrical outbursts in song of David. For opinions as to their truthfulness to the time, see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IV., Notes, p. 376. Point out all references and figures of speech which add to the beauty of the diction. Compare the nature of the language used by "Rabbi Ben Ezra." Does the nature of the references and illustrations in this group of rhymed poems determine the tone of the poem as much as it does in the group of blank-verse poems?

*Queries for Discussion.* — In how many ways can you trace the influence of Shakespeare's Caliban on Browning's "Caliban"?

"Saul" has been considered by some critics to be the finest single poem of Browning's. Mr. Symons remarks: "Indeed it seems to unite almost every poetic gift in consummate and perfect fusion: music, song, the beauty of nature, the joy of life, the glory and greatness of man, the might of love, human and divine: all these are set to an orchestral accompaniment of magnificent continuous harmony, now

hushed as the wind among the woods at evening, now strong and sonorous as the storm-wind battling with the mountain pine." Though the poem may be worthy all this praise, do you feel that there are other poems in this group finer, because more absolutely original in treatment?

Do you think the artistic force of "A Death in the Desert" somewhat weakened by the complicated series of speakers? or do you think it an artistic device to place John in perspective, so surrounding him in mystery, at the same time that there is a direct line of connection with the present speaker?

Would not "Bishop Blougram" preserve its artistic unity better if the poet had not added those explanatory stanzas at the end?

Does it seem like an apology on the poet's part for having drawn the Bishop in such uncomplimentary colors, and an attempt to shift the blame upon Gigadibs, by insinuating that he was not worth a better argument? If this were true, would it be better or worse for the Bishop?

From the study of these poems do you get an impression of the power and variety of Browning's genius?

## THE PRELATE

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*Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* —  
 Browning's Prelates : A Character Study.

*Hints* : — Before bringing his first prelate on the stage in "Pippa Passes," Browning lets us know from Pippa how highly he was thought of, and then from Bluphocks how lightly he was regarded. Moreover, Bluphocks not only casts doubt upon him, but implicates him in the plot against Pippa. Pippa's words (Introduction, lines 62-68 and 181-186) reflect that class of public opinion which takes the holiness of an exalted prelate for granted ; but those of Bluphocks (Part II. lines 329-370) represent public opinion no more trustworthy, — that of a class of sceptics as ready to distrust a priest because his profession is holiness as the pious are to assume him to be good because of it. Should either be accepted ? Does the poet give these two points of view to awaken curiosity and interest in



an independent scrutiny of the character himself when he appears? But notice that he makes Bluphocks give a clue to the plot which may be taken as a fact although it comes through a scoundrel. Does Bluphocks rightly implicate the priest in it?

As the Bishop bows his attendants out, the extreme politeness and, especially, the humility of his saying that he chiefly desires life now that he may recompense them, seem a little dubious. Is he too condescending? Does he mean it? And the addition, spoken aside, "Most I know something of already," may indicate a system of spying on them, and that he has such a conception of his duty to his office as Shakespeare makes Angelo have in "Measure for Measure," — to ferret out evil and punish the sinner, instead of rescuing the sinned against. Or is this a hit at the Intendant? Is the Monsignor an abstemious man, or is there any reason to suspect him of forced asceticism? (lines 4, 23-25, 119-121). Why do you think the Intendant is "bashful" about taking the "dainties"? (See also l. 68.) Does he feel uneasy, and have his own slippery deeds made him so, or his fear of the Bishop's capacity in the same line? Maybe he has noticed the Sicilian's surprise that a repast has been prepared, and thought the remark was intended to forestall a fear that there was any intention to poison him. But is this likely at the date of the play? (The references to Prince Metternich and Austrian tyranny permit an approximation of the date.) Is it a revelation of the Bishop's character that his talk flows so affably on, between his thrusts at the Intendant, in picturesque descriptions of midsummer heat at Messina, and in dissertations, à propos of Jules, on the prospects for a new school of art? What do

you gather from the talk otherwise as to the Bishop's antecedents and character and his intentions toward sin and the particular sinner before him? When the Intendant, shrewdly suspecting that the Bishop is not averse to profiting by the crimes he means to make a virtue of detecting and punishing, checkmates him by saying that it has happened in this case, as in all the old stories, that the child was not killed, but is ready to produce (171-177), notice the effect on the Bishop. Does the Intendant's rejoinder betoken that his lordship was choleric and tried to strike him? Does this justify the Intendant in thinking his guess right, that the Bishop is not anxious to be assured of the child's safety? What is his reason for letting the Bishop know that Carlo of Cesena is in the secret too, and has been blackmailing him? In which speech is the Monsignor's real feeling betrayed, where he cries, "Liar!" or, "I would you spoke truth for once"? Does the Intendant judge rightly as to his secret desire to appear good without really being so, in his final proposition? Does Pippa's song expose the Bishop's true aspiration toward righteousness? Or does it actually warm into life a tendency to be as good as he appears, which was but latent before? Notice Pippa's final remark upon the Bishop (lines 272-280). Does her insight throw the right light on his character?

In comparison with this Bishop, does the Nuncio of "The Return of the Druses" show a greater or less insincerity in his professions of love for his sheep? Is it due to his greater danger that he is so much keener-witted, or is his nature both stronger in fibre and more frankly material in its secret desires and in its assumption of mastery over the people, than that of the Monsignor? Notice Djabal's previous knowl-

edge of him as Luke of Stamboul (lines 166, 210), and what this implies. Also his purchase of the Prefectship (32-40), and his use of the dead Prefect's sunken treasure ship, containing the price he himself had brought him, into a means to win over the uninitiated Druses by giving them to understand they were intended as the gift of the Church to them. His mind dwells on those bezants. Notice his idea of a miracle (184). But the situation was desperate, as his own account of it shows (20-30); and the mutter among the Orientals hemming him in — "Tear him!" brings out his powers of mind in defence against their merely physical advantage over him. When he finds how effective his bluff "Ye dare not," etc., is, does he weaken or strengthen our admiration of his pluck by taking the opposite tack — "Said I, refrain from tearing me? I pray ye tear me! Shall I," etc. Does his silence when new persons or new events come into calculation, and his instant seizure of any hint about them that may be turned to his advantage, reveal an unusual combination of powers, — caution and astuteness with alertness and adroitness? Exemplify this.

Is there any sign in the Nuncio of the art-loving tastes of the Monsignor? His utter worldliness, his hard-headedness about the supernatural, are his strong points. Notice that his last speech is the confident challenge to Djabal to exalt himself. This comes, too, after Anael's death, which has not shaken him for an instant. Does this distinguish him from the Monsignor, again, whose half-and-half virtue is his weak point? He is much less confidently worldly than the Nuncio, and is capable of being frightened emotionally, as it were, while a physical fright, fear for

his life, and concern for the loss of both bezants and bishopric are what wring the heart of the Nuncio.

Ogniben is not put in a situation which brings out his own secret foibles, but in one which makes use of his characteristic combination of affability and shrewdness to bring out the secret foibles of Chiappino. He knows beforehand that the Prefect is not killed, and he has been informed, too, as to who really dealt the blow, so he has to manage Chiappino, whose principles he has reason to suspect, with reference to another man of worth, Luitolfo, whom he does not fear, and he acquits himself of his task, both with relation to them and to the Church he serves, with insight, tact, and intelligence. He consciously brings to light all Chiappino's lurking infidelity, as Pippa unconsciously wakens all the allegiance to good lying dormant in the Monsignor's pious intentions. Show how ably he does this. But, after all, does his success depend at bottom on Chiappino himself? Would Ogniben show to as good advantage if he had a sincere character to grapple with? The quality in him that is not exalted, and which would be detected, one may guess, if he had to deal with a revolter whom he could not add to his list of "three-and-twenty leaders of revolts," is his disbelief in disinterestedness. Would he not appear as much at a disadvantage as Braccio, for example, if he had a Luria to bring to justice? He is unable to conceive of liberty as anything but a pretext for self-aggrandizement, and he is as sceptical about disinterestedness as the Nuncio is about Druse miracles.

The Bishop who builds his tomb at St. Praxed's Church agrees with the Monsignor of "Pippa Passes" in his artistic tastes; and the Nuncio is a boor, compared to him, in love of material advantage. His joy

in beauty is so thoroughly sensuous, so utterly unaware of the existence of such a thing as inward beauty in art, that he is like a child beside his sophisticated fellow-prelates, and represents a stage of unconsciousness of self so undeveloped that it can only be compared with that of the evangelical parish-priest in "The Inn Album" (Part IV. lines 240-415), who, although so opposite to him in any æsthetic capacity as in any similarity of outward environment, is scarcely more crude in knowledge of himself. The arrested development of the uncultured evangelical English clergyman of the present century and the unawakenedness of the cultured Italian prelate of the Renaissance are equally ugly in character, from a spiritual point of view; although one may justly take more pleasure in the Italian than the Englishman, because he is a natural product of an early stage of European civilization, while the Englishman is an unnatural growth, thwarting the legitimate progress of modern life.

There is, however, little insincerity or doubleness of aim in either of them. They have the virtue of primitive types. The man whose moral possibilities are awakening can be more of a hypocrite or a potential villain than one who has not yet reached the transitional phase where choice begins to be consciously taken and villany or virtue may result. There is one token that the Bishop feels guilty. He hesitates over telling how to find the buried lump of *lapis lazuli* secretly saved when his church was on fire (lines 33-50). Does this suggest the necessity for caution merely, or does his conscience trouble him a little? Are there any other such signs of uneasiness? (3-9.) The mixture of Bible phrase with Pagan emblems sometimes suggests not only that his mind naturally betrays

the Pagan taste belonging to an Italian, but also that he covers his greater delight in the latter with a pose in the professional line expected of him.

The desire to get the better of a rival, to excite envy, and occupy a place of power and importance in public opinion, is the impulse that moves Bishop Blougram to make his apology as it moved the Bishop of St. Praxed's to make his dying requests. What other similarities of character are there between the two men? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. V., Introduction, pp. xviii and xix.) In sophistication, brain-power, materialism, and adroitness, Bishop Blougram is a Nuncio raised to the highest power; and in affability, fluency, and social gifts, as well as in his scepticism toward disinterestedness, he is a cooler hand than Ogniben. Nevertheless, in just the fact that Gigadibs's criticism of his sincerity makes him as desirous to subjugate him as the Bishop of St. Praxed's was to get the better of old Gandolf in his grave and torture him with envy, the poet lets us discern — through his uneasiness of conscience about this — the weak point in his character, and also the shifting of the moral ideals of the nineteenth century, which the Bishop vaguely feels, towards a genuine love of man and against such claims as his for personal power, luxury, and rank.

Is Gigadibs the nonentity he is commonly supposed to be? Or is he very important to the poem in the light he throws on its purport? Notice that he is represented as being led to action of an unexpected kind by this talk. And how do you deem the fact should be interpreted, as a comment on the Bishop's argument and character, that, instead of sitting with Blougram "this many a year," as the Bishop thinks



he will, he does "not sit five minutes" (lines 1005-1014), being seized with a "sudden healthy vehemence" to put into practice in a new world a simpler way of life, in closer accord with the last chapter of St. John?

Does this imply that the Christianity the Bishop professes is opposed, in its exaltation of favored persons to material comfort and prominence, to the social ardor and ministry to others which was Christ's last bidding to his disciples in that chapter?

The Churchmen whose characters are more or less fully portrayed in "The Ring and the Book" may be best seen, first, from the standpoint of the chief and wisest one of them, the Pope. Then the accounts given of them elsewhere in the poem from other points of view may be collected and compared with his; especially those of Caponsacchi given by himself, in Part VI., and Pompilia, in Part VII., both of him and of the others.

The Pope characterizes the Abate as a fox, "all craft but no violence;" the young Canon Girolamo, as the "hybrid," neither fox nor wolf, "neither craft nor violence wholly;" the Archbishop as a knight enfeebled by the gold and silk of the Church's favor, who, instead of championing the victim, took part with the wolf against her. His judgment of them all is based upon his own conception of the shepherd's proper office being to feed the sheep, and disregard the lust and pride of life. From disheartenment over their moral failure he turns with cheer to Caponsacchi's "use of soldiership, self-abnegation, freedom from all fear, loyalty." Is his view of all these Churchmen just? Is his stern, unbiassed judgment against those he so grieves, for the sake of the Church,

especially to condemn, a high proof of his own disinterestedness? Notice, also, that he has to face some scandal against the Church he honors to defend Caponsacchi, and *not* to let off Guido. "Religion's parasite" he calls him. Is his reprimand of Caponsacchi a moral weakening on his part from the high stand he has taken; or is it sincere and natural from his clerical point of view? Notice, too, that he has no idea of the purity of love for a priest, but is again true to his clerical ideals in praising Caponsacchi for resisting love (ll. 1164-1187). In what respects does he over-praise and under-praise Caponsacchi? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. V., Introductory Essay, p. xxx, and compare with Caponsacchi's own account of his action and motives.)

Not only in his sentence of Guido is the Pope's fidelity to what he thinks right attested. He is above bias and seeks truth outside the pale of ecclesiasticism, reviewing the past and forecasting the future in quest of truth. Yet, despite his fears lest it was the world's enmity that gave the early Christians their spiritual insight and vigor, and that the world's approval of the Church as an established institution deadens the ardor of her sons for virtue and tends to make the politic and thrifty seem to them the only wisdom (ll. 1821-1831); despite the suspicion that the natural man has it in him to exceed in virtue any "warmth by law and light by rule" (ll. 1527-1550); despite his foreboding that in an age to come there may be a few able to reach an unauthoritative truth and "correct the portrait by the living face, man's God, by God's God in the mind of man;" despite all these undaunted adventurings of a brave mind, a pure and disinterested love of the truth, the Pope does

not for an instant question his own duty and prerogative as the head of the Church to smite with all his authority the wrong he sees (ll. 1950-1954).

In Browning's last book, "Asolando," companion sketches of two prelates appear, — one as wily and yet almost as naïvely hypocritical in his self-seeking as the Nuncio, and the other as true-hearted as the Pope of "The Ring and the Book." But is this Pope of "The Bean-Feast" as acute and subtle as Antonio Pignatelli? How do you derive from this short poem that he was simple-minded and lovable? And from the other lightly written piece, how is it that you gather an impression of the hit being against the people who were disarmed from cavil at the fisherman's origin by his external humility, rather than against the humor-loving Pope who saw through them?

*Queries for Discussion.* — What effect would a song of Pippa's have to deter the Nuncio of "The Return of the Druses" from a profitable tacit assent to a crime?

Was Browning true to nature in portraying in the Monsignor a man who could be swayed by Pippa's song?

Would the Pope of "The Ring and the Book" approve of Bishop Blougram? Judged by this Pope's idea of the Church as the embodiment of the rule, that "Man is born nowise to content himself, but please God," which of these prelates would deserve his commendation?

Is this Pope alone enough to justify the priesthood for all the slurs its unworthy members cast upon it? Or does he rather justify human nature, which can be so sound and genuine that neither hierarchy nor partisanship can bend it from the love of the truth?

# Browning Study Programmes

## SECOND SERIES



### SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "PARACELSUS"

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I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— The Ideal of Paracelsus, Proposed Methods of Attainment, and Festus's Criticism. (Part I.) (For hints upon this and following topics, see Notes as given above and Introduction to Vol. I.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — In his relations with his friends does Paracelsus show himself capable of great depths of affection?

Does the weakness of his ideal as he presents it to his friends consist in its insistence that truth is latent within the soul of man, needing only the discovery of proper outside stimuli to make it blossom forth? — in his assumption that he of all men has been chosen by God to attain absolute knowledge? — in his throwing over of all past wisdom as aids in his search? — or in his determination to seek good for men while remaining aloof from them?

Is there any resemblance between the theories of Paracelsus and Herbert Spencer's exposition of life as

the continuous adjustment of inner relations to outer relations? (For sketch of the working of this principle in evolution, see John Fiske's "Through Nature to God," chap. viii.)

If it be admitted that Paracelsus had hit upon a right principle, that intuition (or inner relation) develops by means of a way being opened up from outside (the effect of external stimuli), then would the chief flaw in his ideal be that he claimed too great absoluteness for the knowledge when gained?

Has not this mistake been made by modern scientists who have confused knowledge of phenomena with knowledge of causes?

If his principle was right, what was there wrong about his method of investigation? Was it that he sought to find direct analogies between soul and nature by means of arbitrary signs and symbols instead of by means of experimental experience?

Did Paracelsus show his good sense, however, in his objections to the wisdom of the sages, whom he rejected?

Does Festus do him justice? Do his criticisms show him more friendly than penetrating?

Do you consider the ideal of Festus which Michal echoes — that one must receive appreciation and have love for one's work — the highest, or is there something noble in the determination to do good and forego the reward of appreciation? Is it best of all to do good though sympathy for one's efforts be lacking, yet to be conscious of the need of sympathy, and respond to it when it comes?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— Methods Found Wanting, and through Aprile a New Conception of Life Revealed. (Part II.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — What various tendencies are at war with one another in the mood of Paracelsus as he appears at the house of the Greek conjurer?

Does he show any intuition at all of the true cause of his failure?

Does not this passage, up to line 280, seem to you a remarkable presentation of the character of a man with a proud and dauntless spirit, brought to bay at last, now catching at the hated conjuring methods in the hope of some respite, now struggling to keep his ideal pure and to retain faith in himself? In this terrible struggle of his spirit does he seem in danger of losing his mind? If this were so, might the appearance of Aprile be explained as a hallucination?

Is the song heard outside meant to apply especially to Aprile, or to both Aprile and Paracelsus?

Do Aprile's ideals of art show a democratic inclusiveness? Can art be made democratic without ceasing to be art? (See Tolstoy on this point in "What is Art?") Are Tolstoy's arguments biassed by the fact that in his democracy he tends to bring all intelligence to a universal plane, instead of recognizing the needs of various grades of intelligence?

Does Aprile mistake the nature of Paracelsus and his achievements by calling him a poet and his king? Does he show at the end that he has discovered his mistake?

Was Aprile's error not so much that he denied knowledge, but that he desired to encompass the infinite in his love instead of patiently touching it here and there through man's means?

Is the statement made by Paracelsus, that each had failed through not recognizing each other's worth as



typical of love and knowledge, the whole of the truth ?

Does Paracelsus really understand the drift of Aprile's remark, " Yes ; I see now. God is the perfect poet, who in His person acts his own creations " ?

Aprile has been said to stand as a type of the Renaissance. Did the Renaissance tend in the direction of greater democracy in art ? (See Symonds, Vernon Lee, Burckhardt, on the Renaissance.) Was not Paracelsus himself just as much a fruit of the Renaissance ?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — How Paracelsus Puts his New View of Life into Practice. (Part III.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Does Paracelsus show in this part that he had mistaken the drift of Aprile's lesson of Love ?

Does he say anything to lead you to suppose that he confuses the idea of love with that of mere artistic appreciation ?

Is he right in insisting on the integrity of his nature, which is that of a scientist, not of an artist ?

Is his irritation at Festus uncalled for ? or are Festus's attempts to sympathize with him somewhat blundering ?

Do you gather from the talk of Paracelsus in this part that he had any belief in magic, or that he sometimes played upon people's credulity by using the prevailing superstitions of the age ?

In his attitude toward his pupils at Basel, does he show any signs of love toward them ? Just why does he desire to pass on his knowledge to them ? Is there anything to be said in defence of his pupils for turning against him ?

Is he right when he says that only drastic measures will impress upon his listeners that he is a pioneer in new fields of knowledge?

In his description of his services to knowledge in this part, does he give a good idea of the real Paracelsus? (See Dr. Berdoe's article on "Paracelsus the Reformer of Medicine," in his volume of Essays entitled "Browning's Message to his Time," or same in London Browning Society Papers.)

IV. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— Failure and its Effect upon his Mood and Actions.  
(Part IV.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is there any wounded vanity in the feeling of Paracelsus when he finds his disciples have turned against him?

Is his scorn and anger at their stupidity and jealousy justified?

Does he proceed upon his fresh quest of knowledge with any assurance of success?

Does he make any remarks in this act which emphasize the fact that Aprile was mistaken in addressing him as a poet?

Does he show a remarkable power of self-criticism? Why does his knowledge of himself do him no good?

Does he take a step in advance when he decides that knowledge may be gained from emotion and experience as well as from observation? Is this, do you think, what Aprile meant by loving infinitely? For the attainment of universal sympathy is it necessary that one should go through all human experience?

Do the remarks of Festus serve principally as a foil to bring out Paracelsus?

Do the lyrics in this part fitly symbolize phases of Paracelsus's mood ?

V. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— Criticism of his Past Beliefs and Development of his Philosophy. (Part V.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Do the opening remarks of Festus in this part have value principally as presenting all the details of the scene ?

Is the mood of Paracelsus rather one of disappointment and regret in his preliminary ravings on his death-bed than of scorn and bravado, as in the last scene ?

What scenes of his past life seem to haunt him, and to which of them does he make especial reference ?

Does he, in the course of the talk about himself here and in previous acts, give a good idea of the way in which the world regarded him ?

What points are there in common between his final utterances on a life philosophy and the modern theories of evolution ?

Does he carry the principles of evolution into the emotional and spiritual realms of life as well as the physical ?

What does he declare to be the moving force in all this process of development, and what is the ideal toward which it tends ?

Is Paracelsus in line with modern thought in his philosophy ? (For parallelisms in thought between Paracelsus and Herbert Spencer, see comparison of the poem with Spencer's "Data of Ethics," in *Poetlore*, Vol. I., p. 117, March, 1889. Further comparisons may be drawn from Spencer's "First Principles," John Fiske's "Cosmic Philosophy," Joseph LeConte's "Evolution and its Relation to

Religious Thought;" Henry Drummond's "The Ascent of Man.")

VI. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Historical Paracelsus and his Relation to his Age Compared with Browning's Portrayal of Him.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Are the five scenes given by Browning in the life of Paracelsus founded upon any actual incidents? Browning's own account may be consulted for this, to which may be added the information that, according to Van Helmont's account, "Tartari Historia," Paracelsus came to Constantinople in 1521 and received there the Philosopher's Stone. In the language of Paracelsus, according to Hartmann, "The Philosopher's Stone" was an allegorical expression, meaning the principle of wisdom upon which the philosopher who has obtained it by practical experience may fully rely.

How many of the actual events in the life of Paracelsus can you trace through the poem, and how does the poet present them? (Franz Hartmann's "Life of Paracelsus" may be consulted; also the account in the "Encyclopædia Britannica.")

Does Browning speak truly when he says he had changed the facts of his life but little?

Is it very easy to see, however, that Browning added to his knowledge of the historical account of Paracelsus some knowledge of his work, which he used in developing the character of the man?

Did the real Paracelsus believe that there existed in all an inmost core and centre of truth; and did he consider knowledge could only be found by such methods as those adopted by the poet's Paracelsus; and had he the same sort of faith in his great mission?

The following quotations from the works of Para-

celsus cited by Hartmann throw light on this subject :  
 " All numbers are multiples of one, all sciences converge to a common point, all wisdom comes out of one centre, and the number of wisdom is one. The light of wisdom radiates into the world, and manifests itself in various ways according to the substance in which it manifests itself. . . . We may grow into knowledge, but we cannot grow knowledge ourselves, because in ourselves is nothing but what has been deposited there by God." (" De Fundamento Sapientiae.")  
 " It is a great truth which you should seriously consider, that there is nothing in heaven or upon the earth which does not also exist in man, and God who is in heaven exists also in man, and the two are but One."  
 " Whoever desires to be a practical philosopher ought to be able to indicate heaven and hell in the Microcosm, and to find everything in man which exists upon the earth ; so that the corresponding things of the one and the other appear to him as one, separated by nothing else but the form. He must be able to turn the exterior into the interior." " It is the knowledge of the upper firmament that enables us to know the lower firmament in man, and which teaches in what manner the former continually acts upon and interrelates with the latter." " The soul does not perceive the external or internal physical construction of herbs and roots, but it intuitively perceives their powers and virtues, and recognizes at once their *signatum*." " The knowledge to which we are entitled is not confined within the limits of our own country and does not run after us, but waits until we go in search of it. No one becomes a master of practical experience in his own house, neither will he find a teacher of the secrets of nature in the corners of his

own room. . . . He who wants to study the book of nature must wander with his feet over its leaves. . . . Every part of the world represents a page in the book of nature, and all the pages together form the book that contains her great revelations." "I know that the monarchy [of mind] will belong to me, that mine will be the honor."

Is there anything among the writings of Paracelsus to justify the scorn of the conjurer he shows ; his desire to find the secret of making gold so that he might show of how little importance he considered it ; and his several flings at magic ?

Drawing upon Hartmann again, we may quote the following from Paracelsus : " Magic and Sorcery are two entirely different things and there is as much difference between them as there is between light and darkness, and between white and black. Magic is the greatest wisdom and the knowledge of supernatural powers." — " To use wisdom, no external ceremonies and conjurations are required. The making of circles and the burning of incense are all tomfoolery and temptation, by which only evil spirits are attracted." " What shall I say to you about all your alchemical prescriptions, about all your retorts and bottles, crucibles, mortars, and glasses, of all your complicated processes of distilling, melting, cohibiting, coagulating, sublimating, precipitating and filtering, of all the tomfoolery for which you throw away your time and money ?" Hartmann says : " Although Paracelsus asserts that it is possible to make gold and silver by chemical means, and that some persons have succeeded in making it, still he condemns such experiments as useless." (See, also, *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. I., Introduction.)



Is it possible that Browning confused magic with sorcery, and meant Paracelsus to make his flings against the latter?

Did Paracelsus, as Browning shows, discount the value of love in the first part of his life, and come to a realization of it afterwards?

On this point Dr. Berdoe says: "The real Paracelsus, as we find him in his works, was full of love for humanity; and it is much more probable that he learned his lesson while travelling, and mixing among the poor and wretched, and while a prisoner in Tartary, where he doubtless imbibed much Buddhist and occult lore from the philosophers of Samarcand, than that anything like the Constantinople drama was enacted. Be this as it may, we have abundant evidence in the many extant works of Paracelsus that he was thoroughly imbued with the spirit and doctrines of the Eastern occultism, and was full of love for humanity. A quotation from his 'De Fundamento Sapientiae' must suffice: 'He who foolishly believes is foolish; without knowledge there can be no faith. God does not desire that we should remain in darkness and ignorance. We should be all recipients of the Divine wisdom. We can learn to know God only by becoming wise. To become like God we must become attracted to God, and the power that attracts us is love. Love to God will be kindled in our hearts by an ardent love for humanity; and a love for humanity will be caused by a love to God.'"

Possibly Browning developed the tale that Paracelsus received the "Philosopher's Stone" (wisdom) into the scene with Aprile.

By love does Browning mean merely affectionate human relations, or an attitude of mind toward man

and the universe, which recognizes a beneficent purpose in the universe and therefore sympathizes with humanity in its struggles toward the light, its failures and its partial triumphs?

On this point Professor Royce says, in his paper "The Problem of Paracelsus" ("Boston Browning Society Papers," p. 229): "Is it Nature, or is it Spirit; is it the physical world, or the moral world; is it the outer order of natural events, or is it the conscious life of mankind in their social, their moral, their emotional relations; is it the world as the student of natural wonders, or the world as the lover of human life, the artist, the portrayer of passion, comprehends it; in fine, is it the world of the 'powers' of nature or the world of the heart of man, that is the most likely and adequate to furnish facts capable of illustrating and embodying the divine purpose?"

Is *Aprile* a vision or an actual mad poet? How much in Part III. is a development from hints as to the character of Paracelsus, and how much is due to Browning's imaginative interpretation of the facts? For example, do you find anything to indicate that Paracelsus had an overwhelming sense of failure in his work, or is that a necessary deduction made by the poet, on account of his vast pretensions to knowledge?

Browning evidently accepts the view held by the enemies of Paracelsus, that he led a dissipated life and was frequently intoxicated, developing this point of view in the fourth act. Is it Browning's intention to interpret the underlying causes of Paracelsus's action, and so vindicate him while accepting the worst that could be said of him?

Does Paracelsus, in speaking of Michal's death, mean

that her spirit has attained immortality, or that her spirit still lives on earth?

“The life of man is an astral effluvium or a balsamic impression, a heavenly and invisible fire, an enclosed essence or spirit. We have no better terms to describe it. The death of man is nothing else but the end of his daily labor, or taking away the ether of life, a disappearance of the vital balsam, an extinction of the natural light, a re-entering into the matrix of the mother. The natural man possesses the elements of the Earth, and the Earth is his mother, and he re-enters into her and loses his natural flesh; but the real man will be re-born at the day of resurrection into another spiritual and glorified body.” (“De Natura Rerum.”)

What are the points in common between the philosophy of the real Paracelsus and Browning's Paracelsus, and how does the latter transcend the former?

Hartmann says that Paracelsus considered “Man as such, the highest being in existence, because in him Nature has reached the culmination of her evolutionary efforts. In him are contained all the powers and all the substances that exist in the world, and he constitutes a world of his own. In him wisdom may become manifest, and the powers of his soul — good as well as evil — may be developed to an extent little dreamed of by our speculative philosophers. ‘In him are contained all the *Cælestia*, *Terrestria*, *Undosa*, and *Aeria*.’” Again Hartmann describes his philosophy: “The object of man's existence is to become perfectly happy, and the shortest way to become so is to be perfect and happy now, and not wait for a possibility to become so in a future state of existence. All may be happy, but

only the highest happiness is enduring, and permanent happiness can be obtained only by permanent goodness. The highest a man can feel and think is his highest ideal, and the higher we rise in the scale of existence and the more our knowledge expands, the higher will be our ideal." (Other citations may be found in Hartmann's book to the same effect. This book is chiefly valuable for its quotations from the works of Paracelsus, and for its complete list of his works. Being written from the point of view of a modern theosophist, its opinions are probably somewhat biassed, though they agree in the main with the articles in the "Encyclopædia Britannica.")

Do the personalities of Festus and Michal take hold of the imagination ?

Arthur Symons says: "Festus, Michal's husband, the friend and adviser of Paracelsus, is a man of simple nature and thoughtful mind, cautious yet not cold, clear-sighted rather than far-seeing, yet not without enthusiasm; perhaps a little narrow and commonplace, as the prudent are apt to be. . . . Michal . . . is faint in outline and very quiet in presence, but though she scarcely speaks twenty lines, her face remains with us like a beautiful face seen once and never to be forgotten. There is something already in her tentative delineation, of that piercing and overpowering tenderness which glorifies the poet of Pompilia."

Of these two, Mrs. Fanny Holy, in her "Outline Study of Paracelsus," says: "The character of Festus rivals that of Paracelsus in its strength and individuality. He embodies in a marvellous degree the ideal friend of humanity. Paracelsus would serve man and God, but Festus would serve God by loving man. . . . Michal, the wife of Festus, is Browning's first attempt to por-

tray a woman. She is little more than a vision, hardly individualized, and looks out among the stronger personalities of the poem like the shadowy face of an angel in some old painting. She is 'Sweet Michal.' She weeps like a child when Aureole would leave them; she sings when all alone.

"Michal carries but small part in the long talk between the friends on that parting night, in the little garden at Wurtzburg.

"It is significant that Aureole constantly addresses Michal, and puts words into her mouth as though divining her thoughts. It is Michal who first discerns that Aureole's faith and purpose are settled and not to be shaken.

"She listens to Aureole's passionate declaration, that at times, he dreamed of having spent one life the sage's way.

"She declares that Aureole is God's commissary, but warns him man should be very humble, while he is very proud. Then follows the final appeal of Aureole, to which they both listen, awed into submission to his will at last.

"Both declare assent. The sun sinks behind Saint Saviour's, the eve deepens, till the great moon and the mottled owls warn them the parting hour is near."

VII. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Poem as a Work of Art.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Has this poem any of the characteristics of a true drama in the development of motive, the management of plot, the arrangement of situations, the portrayal of character? If not, upon what grounds may it be claimed as an organic work of art?

Gustav Freytag, defining "What is Dramatic?" says: "An action, in itself, is not dramatic. Passionate feeling, in itself, is not dramatic. Not the presentation of a passion for itself, but of a passion which leads to action, is the business of dramatic art; not the presentation of an event for itself, but for its effect on a human soul is the dramatist's mission. The exposition of passionate emotions as such, is in the province of the lyric poet; the depicting of thrilling events is the task of the epic poet."

Mr. Fotheringham says of this poem: "If drama of any sort be made, we must have *personæ* vitally acting and reacting on each other, and together bringing the conclusion; and if the drama could never be 'played,' never be spoken, it must still be evolved under its conditions in and through its *dramatis personæ*. Now we are probably pretty well agreed that 'Paracelsus' does not fulfil these conditions or meet these tests. We have said that the *personæ* are not persons. Aprile is a type, even Festus. Paracelsus is vital and fairly defined, but the persons do not steadily act and react on each other to evolve the conclusions. Paracelsus alone 'acts.' It is true the others have some influence on him, largely passive, indirect; but the drama of his career in its power and its weakness springs chiefly from within. The development is the development of the mind and character, of the genius of Paracelsus; the others, even Festus, and Festus even in the last scene, are quite subsidiary to the play of his mind and will."

Upon this point Mr. Symons says: "What is not a drama, though in dialogue, nor yet an epic, except in length, can scarcely be considered properly artistic in form."



Is there anything in the constitution of things which forbids a poet to invent a new form if he wishes to do so? Why should the poem not be called a dramatic soul-epic? dramatic, because expression is given direct by means of talk; soul, to limit the range of expression to spiritual instead of physical action; epic, to limit the character interest to the hero?

Would the organic unity of such a poetic form depend upon the consistent connecting of the moods of the soul, and the entire subordination of other characters to the purposes of foils to the hero?

Would this agree with Browning's own conception of the poem? In the preface to his first edition he wrote: "Instead of having recourse to an external machinery of incidents to create and evolve the crisis I desire to produce, I have ventured to display somewhat minutely the mood itself in its rise and progress, and have suffered the agency by which it is influenced to be generally discernible in its effects alone, and subordinate throughout if not altogether excluded."

Although the poem is primarily occupied with the moods of Paracelsus's soul, in giving expression to these does he transmit, so to speak, a sort of background of action and opinion which gives a vivid impression of his times, and many of the men who were contemporary with him?

What is the character of the beautiful nature imagery in this poem? Is it noticeable for the attaching of active human qualities to nature, and are the allusions to nature introduced principally as descriptions of the scene or as comparisons and metaphors illustrative of the thought?

From what other sources are allusions drawn in

“Paracelsus,” and how are they introduced, — as references, as comparisons, or in various ways?

When these more evident ornaments of style are all pointed out, is the diction as a whole remarkable for the nice choice of words, intensive in meaning and harmonious in sound?

What are the characteristics of the blank verse in this poem, — run-on lines, variety in pauses, and arrangement of feet?

What artistic elements do you find in the fine lyrics which further adorn it?

Mr. Fotheringham writes, in his “Studies of the Mind and Art of Browning”: “The poem has grave faults and defects of structure, quality, and style. It is diffuse. The dramatic situation and motives are by no means clear. The characters or the types — for the figures are rather types than persons — are by no means distinct. The speeches are numerous and lengthy — too many and too long, often. And there is at times that ‘excess’ of phrase and color which young romanticists mostly fall into.” Do you consider this criticism shows lack of proper understanding and appreciation? or do you prefer it to that of Mr. Symons, who comparing “Paracelsus” with such a poem as Bailey’s “Festus” and others of that brood, says: “But it is distinguished from this prolific progeny not only by a finer and firmer imagination, a truer poetic richness, but by a moderation, a concreteness, a grip, which are certainly all its own. In few of Mr. Browning’s poems are there so many individual lines and single passages which we are so apt to pause on, to read again and again, for the mere enjoyment of their splendid sound and color. And this for a reason. The large and lofty character of Para-

celsus, the avoidance of much external detail, and the high tension at which thought and emotion are kept throughout, permit the poet to use his full resources of style and diction without producing an effect of unreality or extravagance."

## SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "SORDELLO"

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I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Poet's Dream Life. (As told in Book I. For hints on this and the following topics, see the general digest and the more detailed summaries of each book given in the Notes, also the Introduction, to the *Camberwell Browning*, as cited above.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is the account of Sordello's youth applicable to the childhood of mankind in general, or merely to the boyhood of a poet?

Miss A. Tolman Smith, in "Browning's 'Sordello': A Study in the Psychology of Childhood" (*Poet-lore*, Vol. VI., pp. 238-243, May, 1894), says: —

"Rousseau expressed the wish that 'some discreet person would give us a treatise on the art of observing children'. . . Now . . . the study of children has become a passion. We have . . . laboratory investigations, delicate tests of the sensorium, velocity of nerve currents, motor localizations . . . after the analytic method of Descartes. It is not the observation which Rousseau intended . . . Soul is a synthesis. We really do not know it at all, unless we

know it as an active totality. . . . In [poets] the synthesis is most complete ; hence Soul as interpreted by them is the soul of our individual self-consciousness . . . The first book [of 'Sordello'] is purely a study of childhood in the method of a poet who speaks not after the traditions of a school or a craft but by insight . . . It is a poet's soul whose development we are watching, — a poet's soul revealed through a poet . . . And yet I fancy a poet's soul revealed through a poet differs from the common only by degrees of intensiveness." (See remainder of this article for further hints.)

What sort of a poet is Sordello, and is there anything about his nature as a poet which makes his career of more importance to the world at large than that of any other kind of poet ?

Referring to the two classes of poets described in the first book, Dr. C. C. Everett, in "Sordello : The Hero as Poet" (*Poet-lore*, Vol. VIII., pp. 243-256, May, 1896), writes : —

"A little singularly, while we have thus presented to us different classes of mind that seem to be anti-thetic to one another, Sordello appears to belong to them both. The description of the gentler class starts from the portraiture of Sordello ; and the description of the second class passes into a portraiture of the same."

Is this a confusion in Browning's thought which causes an indefensible perplexity to the reader, or is it done with design, and is Dr. Everett's conjecture right, that "perhaps one represents his earlier, and the other his somewhat later experience" ?

Is the second class of poet treated by Browning as if, because he had the centralized consciousness which

is the sign of dramatic capacity, he were the fruit of a higher human evolution, and the token of a higher stage of development for all mankind?

But in that case is it likely that he would be so dependent on the world and reality as Sordello discovers himself to be? Is this a mistake of Brown-ing's? Does the more highly evolved man grow more dependent on his fellows with development or less? Is the artist, that is, the man whose will must wreak itself on expression and creation, the highest type of man, or the enfeebled and epileptic victim of his genius Lombroso diagnoses in his book on "The Man of Genius"? Does Lombroso discriminate between different classes of faculty in men of genius? And does he show any perception of the difficulty involved, with reference to evolution, in assuming what is normal and what abnormal?

How is the imaginative consciousness, the peculiar gift of the poet, able to further the advance of mankind? Because, through its energy, potency is liberated to set the consciousness of other men at work in their own way, promoting thus their development? May evolution proceed on the psychical plane of human life through psychical influences and habits?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Awakening to Social Life. (See Book II.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Why should the poet exclaim "Steal aside, and die, Sordello; this is real, and this abjure," when he comes upon the crowd round the pavilion, and knows that Palma is there? Is it because as poet he should devote himself to art, for art's sake, and forswear any special pleasures for the sake of representing all?



What type of poet does Eglamor represent? Is he more lovable than Sordello?

What class of critic does Browning mean to satirize in Naddo? Why is Naddo not right in counselling Sordello to "build on the human heart"? And how far is Sordello justified in his counter claim that his own heart is human, and that he is equally bound to build on that? Should a poet never rise higher than his audience? Does future fame for the poet depend upon his work's suiting the emotions, thoughts, and ideals of the majority of men, or of the minority of men — those most evolved — who will in due time become the majority? What relation to the theory of evolution in poetic art has the philosophy of art implied in "Sordello"?

Which of the factors of the social life now put in touch, at this phase of his career, with Sordello comes to have the strongest influence upon him, — competition, fame, or criticism? Do they affect him favorably or unfavorably? Does it follow, because his love of supremacy and applause and his desire to forestall unfavorable criticism brought his personality and poetic genius out for display upon new planes of action, leading finally to disillusionment and self-disgust, that they were not serviceable to him? How? Why did he fail as a poet? And what sort of failure is meant, — failure with respect to his own ideals, or his fame? — his actual accomplishment, or possible accomplishment?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Relapse toward Nature. (Book II. from line 937 to end, and Book III.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — How do you account for the dispassionateness of nature

having power to soothe Sordello so perfectly, yet having so brief an effect upon him? What had the earthquake to do with it? And why did it suggest death?

This period of calm in the midst of Sordello's life may be compared with the scene in Goethe's "Faust" describing a like period of retreat and recuperation before the second part of Faust's career began. What important resemblance and differences do you note between them? Sordello's sense of life, and of longing to taste its meaning more deeply, is at its height now; nature and art alike seem properly now but tributary to real human life, while to Faust comes now a period when life is made tributary to art. Does his Gretchen make her appeal upon the physical side of his nature, and is she only typically suggestive of other light and leading? How is it with Sordello's Palma?

What has Palma to do with Sordello's entry upon the second and most important cycle of his career? "Is she little more than a lay figure" in the poem, as Dr. Everett says, in "Sordello as Man" (*Poet-lore*, Vol. VIII., pp. 313-325, June, 1896), and is "her longing for some master-spirit to control her life rather sentimental than real"? Or does Browning represent her as having the closest possible influence upon the social phase of Sordello's life; and instead of depicting her merely as "longing for some master-spirit to control her life," portray her as the initiator of action, so that she intelligently seeks for some "out-soul" whom she can serve yet control, and through whom she can play an active part on the stage of Italian life, as Adelaide did through Ecelin?

What is the significance of Browning's use in "Sor-

dello" of the word Will? Is it a symbol for the inward energy and desire to initiate action, on which all individual and social progress rests? And is Sordello important to the world of his day, because so richly dowered with the spiritual vitality that craves exercise, could he but be imbued with a sense of his unity with the social life, and make it serve his pleasure, not by subordinating it to his own self-expression, but by stimulating it through his art to action?

What does the digression (line 593 to close of Book III.) in which Browning speaks of his own work and his relation to it, amount to in brief? That Sordello was one of those poets whose conception of life was larger than his art, and of his own personal life as larger than his art-life? And that he, Browning, in telling his story, had it in view to celebrate the claims of the warped and undeveloped part of humanity to true life and happiness, along the same path of choice the most developed take?

Why is it that the "worst" of the three classes of poets described (866-710), those who say they have seen, are frequently the most popular? Because they are the easiest to follow, since they only have to be taken at their word? Or because they belong to the earliest stage of development and find more men on their level? Why is the second class, the descriptive poet, generally more appreciated than the makers-see, who, like Browning himself, fail to make some people see at all? Is this perhaps because theirs is an art that requires its appreciators to help themselves?

In the digest of the *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. II., p. 333, the first example of the kind of poet who finds disclosures in each face and writes so as to make this seen, is attributed to the third, the dramatic kind

of poet ; the second example, of Plara's youth, etc., to the second, the pictorial poet ; and the third example, saying that Lucio is sad, to the merely subjective poet. The explanation given by other commentators, as to which example belongs to which poet, does not agree with this. Which is right ?

Mrs. Orr says : " Corresponding instances follow ; " and then, in a note on this, " The third of these is very characteristic of the state of Sordello's, and therefore, at that moment, of his author's mind. The poet who *makes others see* is he who deals with abstractions : who makes the mood do duty for the man." (" Handbook to R. Browning's Works," sixth edition, by Mrs. Sutherland Orr, p. 42.)

Is this exactly opposed to Browning's view of the *makers-see* ?

Professor Alexander says : " A poet of the highest class is represented as explaining that which an extract from a poet of the most superficial kind reveals to him — something very different from what its author intended. The imaginary auditor admits that the poet has penetrated, through the superficial appearance, to the gist of the matter. Whereupon the poet demands that his auditor should trust his revelations in cases where the auditor cannot follow him." Professor Alexander here adds in a note : " This seems to be the general sense ; but the present writer confesses his inability to follow in detail the speech put in the mouth of this poet of the Third Class." (" Introduction to Browning," by W. J. Alexander, p. 161.)

Are all three of these examples of the different kind of poetic work done by three classes of poets adduced by Browning, in order to prove to the imaginary auditors whom he makes reply suitably after each such

example his own ability as over-poet to understand poets and exhibit their relations to mankind, and his claim, therefore, to be trusted as a guide in the realm of consciousness he proposes to explore?

IV. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Re-entry upon the Social Stage as Champion of the People. (Book IV.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is the first result of Sordello's craving to know what real life is for its own sake, instead of for the sake of making use of it effectively in a poem, — likely to make him more sympathetic with the degraded masses of the people, or to disgust him with them?

What effect would it have on his art, — to make it less governed by the principle of selection, and less dominated by the choice of the beautiful in subject-matter? And if so, is this an argument for the poet not to know life as it is, but remain shut up in dreams about it? What is the bearing of this second part of Sordello's career on the question to-day agitating literary criticism as to realism and idealism in subject-matter, as to inclusiveness or exclusiveness in the writer's choice of what is fit to receive artistic treatment? Where does Browning stand, — with the so-called classicist or the democrat in art? Is his view a reconciliation of the two?

What part has Taurello Salinguerra had in life? Do you agree with Browning that the quality in which Taurello differed from Sordello — carelessness of prominence — shamed Sordello; or was Taurello's lack of personal ambition, which had made him play second in rank where he was first in ability, a serious defect in his character? Had the death of his bride, Retrude, anything to do with it?

Is Taurello, as Mr. W. M. Rossetti holds, the personage in "Sordello" best realized as a creature of flesh and blood, acting the part of a man in a man-like spirit," and Sordello, in contrast, "rather a poor creature"?

Were Sordello's aspirations, as they finally shaped themselves at the close of Book V., "totally alien," as Mr. Rossetti again says, "to the human thought of his time"?

V. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Poet as Reconciler of Parties and Savior of the People. (Book V.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — What relation to democratic progress and to Sordello's ideals has the philosophy of history brought out in the syntheses, given at the beginning of Book V., of the successive stages of the life of the world?

What influence have the women of the poem had in moulding the events of the story and directing the trend of Italian politics? (See note on line 604, p. 379, Vol. II., *Camberwell Browning*.) What had Adelaide to do with determining the life of Taurello and of Sordello? What effect had Palma, first, upon Taurello, in his hesitation whether to take the chief place himself or not; then, upon Sordello in his recent midnight debate with her, at the watch-fire, on Italian politics (end of Book IV.), and now in constituting his personal temptation?

Mr. Nettleship says, in his chapter on "Sordello," in "Robert Browning: Essays and Thoughts," p. 118: "Adelaide's motive in saving him [Sordello] appears to have been to make him in due time head of the Ghibellins." Was Adelaide's motive exactly the reverse of this, to conceal his real birth, and prevent



him from becoming head of the Ghibellins? He continues: "Her reason for her present concealment . . . was that she did not choose to let Ecelin know the truth until Sordello was old enough to take the station she intended for him; and it has been suggested to me that her reason for keeping Taurello in ignorance was that she saw he would have no care to assert his real place if he thought he had no son to succeed him, and that he could thus be kept more securely in the service of Ecelin. I think this suggestion is valuable; but that her real motive was a desire that Taurello's aggrandizement should be wrought by her hands alone." Is whoever made this suggestion to Mr. Nettleship much clearer-sighted than he was himself on this point; and is his own idea about it directly gainsaid by Palma (Book V., lines 801-808), who says that Adelaide swore her, Palma, not to tell Ecelin, and gave her to understand that she, Adelaide, had feared to tell the whole to Ecelin, lest he should be so bungling as to let it out and mar the fortunes of his own family? (See digest of this passage, *Camberwell Browning*, p. 345, also note on line 757, p. 389.)

Does Browning's treatment of the relations of Palma with Sordello suggest that if the hero had been intellectually more open to her influence and insight, his decision as regards the accomplishment of his social aims would have been better?

VI. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
—The Poet as Statesman. (Book VI.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Why did Sordello fail as statesman? Because he lacked power to reconcile his ideal mission with the practical urgencies of the moment, on the one side, and with the moral necessity, on the other side, to conquer his



temptation to gratify his personal desires? (See Introduction, Vol. II., *Camberwell Browning*.)

Or did he fail because as a poet he was bound to fail? In the article before cited Miss A. Tolman Smith says: "With Sordello these [self-]determinations are perpetually changing and ever fail to realize themselves as deeds. Herein the author maintains the unity of his purpose, which is to reveal the poet soul. For the true poet, the ideal is deed. What he prophesies in rapture other men perform. Thus is his mission fulfilled."

But is this Browning's idea? If so, wherein consisted the failure he speaks of? Is it inconsistent with the true poet's ideal that he should be to some degree practically concerned in the gradual realization of it? Does Browning hold that Sordello ought in this way to have failed? If so, would he blame Dante not only for desiring action but for attempting to bring it about? Does he not rather blame Sordello for not acting, and regret that Dante's would-be scheme of action came too late to be feasible?

But why, then, does he praise Eglamor in comparison with Sordello (Book VI. 797-818)? Is this in keeping or not with his idea (III. 864-930) of there being at present three classes of poets: the worst, those who say to the world that they have seen, — that is, the least powerful kind of subjective poet; the better, those who say what they saw, — that is, the more powerful, pictorial kind of subjective poet; the best, those who so see and speak that they make others see for themselves, — that is, the objective or dramatic poet; and, furthermore, of still another class of poet that may come to be in the future, the poet who shall exceed in value to the world the man of action, — that is,

the poet who sees and himself uses what he sees (III. 916-927)? It is to these poets that Browning gives Sordello to be turned and tried. Why? Is it not because they who shall be successful in this pushing of poetic insight and power into practical social action will know how to recognize Sordello as a pioneer in the same path, although he failed and fell by the wayside? Does his praise of Eglamor, by comparison, then, consist in commending him for accomplishing all that was in him to accomplish, each poet or person being properly to blame only for not fulfilling his faculty; and does his blame of Sordello consist, then, in his failure to fulfil his higher capabilities of desire to direct and impel social action?

Is the question Sordello's failure opens up this: May a poet-nature occupy with profit such a position with reference to the world as was open to Sordello? that is, not of action, merely, which it is to be noticed was to be Salinguerra's office, but of the oversight, planning, and direction of action,—its will's will?

Will it be well for the world when behind the politician's hand works the synthetic planning of the poet's brain? Has it not been well for the world whenever such idealizing statesmanship has to some degree made use of practical opportunity and method? Do the affairs of the world—especially now, when national boundaries are breaking up and races are coalescing—cry out for men of large and loving ideals, not little loveless utilities, to stand at the helm and serve the people's advance?

Dean Church sums up the second portion of "Sordello" as "the opening of new thoughts and a new life to Sordello under the influence of Palma. She

has taught him that life needs a worthy object [and Dean Church might have added that his art needed life]. He opens his eyes and sees in palpable proof the miseries of his fellows. But how to remedy it? The great spell of the Middle Ages, the name of Rome, acts upon him. He learns its emptiness. Great factions divide society . . . with great and equal and monstrous crimes. He learns who he is. . . . Salinguerra would make him head of a power which should crush all the petty tyrannies and be able to defy Pope and Emperor. What is there to do? Browning does not tell us." Is this fair to Browning? How does Dean Church get the explanation he adds? "Sordello sees his mission but somehow fails to fulfil it; resists the temptation that would divert him from it [leadership for its own sake, for love of power], resists it in its gross sense, and yet . . . because he missed something which 'he wished should go to him, not he to it' — therefore Dante justly finds him . . . among the greatly negligent . . . the well-intentioned leaders of mankind" — those who see great things and want to do them, but do not see their way to build them up step by step. Does not Browning tell just this?

"Sordello as Browning presents him," says James Fotheringham, in "Studies of the Mind and Art of Robert Browning," p. 163, "is your poetic idealist, dealing first with the things of art, and then called to deal with the things of life, and finding his ideal in the way of his handling either effectively."

Is Sordello's difficulty to some degree that of every mind which finds it impossible to satisfy its highest aims? In which case, what is the worst, the better, and the best course? — to follow the

selfish needs, because the ideal is seen to be impracticable? — to refrain from following these, because they are not ideal? — to recognize that the ideal is and must ever be, so far as man can see, impracticable, and yet to be attained, step by step, if while maintaining the personal life the aim be constantly to approach the ideal?

“In the final book, weighing the old dilemma between good and evil, — how much of evil ought to be removed, how much left to breed with good, in time, a better good, — he forswears the interference of mastery over man’s Now, and chooses instead that spiritual power of sympathy and vision which shall help its utmost to advance man’s Then.” (“The Purport of Browning’s and Whitman’s Democracy,” *Poet-love*, Vol. VII., pp. 556–566, November, 1895.)

But in interfering with mastery over man’s Now — to direct affairs under the imperfect conditions of the time yet with reference to his ideals — would he not have to accommodate actuality and ideals in doubtful ways? And was it not better for him to keep his ideals unflawed by opportunist methods? Is Browning wrong, then, on a moral ground, for blaming his poet that he did not resolve to take up statesmanship?

If in every-day life, however, one refused to accommodate ideals and feasibility, one would come to a standstill, or die, as Sordello did. Is there any choice in ways of realizing the ideal, with reference to the demands of the time? Does Browning suggest the clew?

VII. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Historic Background.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Are

the syntheses of successive historic epochs given in Book V. (124-211) true and enlightening views over the main steps of European social evolution?

Is Browning's employment of the story of Crescentius, in Book IV., to suggest to Sordello a better political method to make use of for the advancement of the people than either the Pope's or the Emperor's, a fanciful notion, or one full of genuine historical interest and appropriateness? (For general suggestions, see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. II., Introduction, pp. xxv and xxvi; for details, Milman's "Latin Christianity" and other histories of the Middle Ages.)

Is "Sordello" true to history in a vital way, in reconstructing the life and ferment of the century which initiated the Renaissance movement?

Mr. George Willis Cooke, in "The Poetic Limitations of 'Sordello'" (*Poet-love*, Vol. IV., pp. 612-617, December, 1892), considers that "Browning has not been true to history; his facts are not the facts of the age he describes . . . He makes an age of feeling to be an age of metaphysical introspection and subjectivity . . . an age of immense activity to be an age of metaphysical questioning . . . an age of sentiment to be an age of intellectual seriousness. In fact, the age of Sordello was rarely serious, and did not give itself to earnest questioning of any kind."

Can this indictment be rebutted on two counts: first, that Browning presents the age on the whole as one of feeling and sentiment and immense activity, and only presents with relation to it a rarely conscious poetic activity whose introspection is thus especially accounted for; second, that Browning's presentation of Sordello himself as a pioneering nature is a rational rescue from semi-oblivion of just such lives as must

have preceded Dante's life to make his possible. Is it justifiable to assert that this age did not give itself to earnest questioning of any kind? For tell-tale evidence of the "earnest questioning" preparing the way of civilization in the thirteenth century, notice the independent personal thought of Frederick II., Sordello's Emperor; the religious theories upheld by the Paulicians, or St. Francis, or St. Elizabeth; the facts that the main universities of "Europe" were founded, and many scientific inventions broached, in the first half of the thirteenth century. "The awakening of the individual soul is not only the distinctive trait of the Renaissance," says Burckhardt, "but its deep cause." Gebhart speaks of the "profound idealism of the middle ages." Vernon Lee and Symonds, in common with other students of Italian history, recognize the original impulse of its movement in the early mediæval revival which Browning has seized upon for "Sordello's" background.

Mr. James Fotheringham takes the view that "the poem departs from history," in his "Studies of the Mind and Art of Browning," pp. 144-146, but seems to have no authority other than his reading of Sismondi: "As Sismondi says, the age was one of brilliant chivalric virtues and atrocious crimes — an age of heroes and monsters among whom the figure of Sordello seems strange and out of place." Why? Does Browning fail to represent these atrocities vividly? (See IV., 12-21, 99-107, 261-291, 342-348; V., 769-776.)

"This kind of romance," continues Mr. Fotheringham, "based on the suggestions rather than the facts of history, and attaching historic names to figures so different from the people who bore them, is open

to criticism, and 'pure invention' would have advantages; but we must take what has stimulated a poet's mind, and regard the poetic and spiritual results as our proper gain."

Can it be held that Browning knew history more thoroughly than his critics?

The most instructed of his critics on the historical side, however, Dean Church, admits that "Browning is a wide reader and draws his illustrative materials from sources locked and sealed to us outsiders." Again: "Sismondi and Milman will give us the history of the time, not quite the same as Browning's, but something like: the only thing that does not seem arbitrary is the geography." (Essay on Sordello in "Dante and Other Essays," by R. W. Church, pp. 221-260.)

Can it also be held that there is a distinct historical value in such a poet's synthetic reconstruction of the life of an important period? And that it is as such not only superior to history in vitality and picturesqueness, but also superior to "pure inventions," however poetic and spiritual, which do not draw their sustenance from actual life?

Is "Sordello" such a work? Although it be conceded to be embarrassed in its historic effectiveness by the soul-development of the hero, can it claim to be a prodigious exemplar of a poet's power to illuminate a recondite period?

VIII. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Dante's Influence on Browning's "Sordello."

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is "Sordello" virtually Browning's explanation of Dante? — his attempt to account for him as a poetic and political phenomenon which, according to Brown-



ing's evolutionary way of regarding all life, must have had a forerunner or some imperfect preceding type?

Dean Church, in the essay on "Sordello" already cited, writes: —

"Who was Sordello, and what makes Browning choose him for a subject? . . . He was plainly a distinguished person in his time, a cunning craftsman in choice and use of language; but, if this was all, his name would only rank with a number of others. . . . He may have been something more than a writer or speaker: he may have been a ruler, though that is doubtful. We know him because . . . he was so much to Dante. Through three cantos he is the companion and guide . . . and we learn Dante's judgment on Sordello: he is more self-centred and in guise haughtier than even the rulers and judges in whose company he awaits cleansing; and he is placed among those who had great opportunities and great thoughts — the men of great chances and great failures . . . The filling up of the story of Sordello is plainly suggested by the fact — we do not say the history, or the character, but the fact and existence of such a creation of human experience and human purpose as Dante's poem . . . Dante's course was shaped by two master influences: for himself passionate and enduring love; for Society, the enthusiasm for righteous government . . . The progress from love and from art to great public thoughts and wonderful achievements for mankind which Dante accomplished, Sordello failed in."

Again, in his essay on Dante, Dean Church explains how the occasion of the unfolding of Dante's poetic gift "was, what is not ordinarily held to be a source of poetical inspiration, — the political life. . . . The factions of Florence made Dante a great poet."

What comparisons and contrasts with Dante does Sordello suggest? Is Sordello's devotion to Palma more secular than Dante's to Beatrice?

Is Dante's Imperialism less progressive than Sordello's dream of democracy?

"The picture of Sordello's solitary boyhood . . . self-centred, self-pleasing, gradually unfolding his strong imaginative nature . . . suggests a contrast with the city life of the boy described in the 'Vita Nuova,' " says Dean Church.

"No set of men," writes Church (in his "Essay on Dante," p. 90), in pointing out how independent in his political ideas was the so-called Ghibellin poet, "would have joined more heartily with all opponents, Guelf, Black, White, and Green, or even Boniface VIII., to keep out such an emperor as Dante imagined, than the Ghibellin nobles . . . Dante's was a dream in the Middle Ages, in divided Italy . . . of a real and national government based on justice and law. It was the dream of a real *state*."

Is Palma Browning's comment on Beatrice's influence over Dante?

See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. II., Introduction, pp. vii, viii, and xx-xxvii, for hints on Dante's influence on Sordello. For allusions in the poem to the women Dante mentions, and to the importance of the influence of those women of the Middle Ages who essayed to play a part in life by means of the ideals of service to them which chivalry supplied, see the same volume, pp. 372, 373, 379, 388, 390. Strange to say, Dean Church, whose studious knowledge of Dante would enable him at once, one would suppose, to turn to the passages in Dante to which Browning alludes when he writes of Palma and the "swooning sphere" (VI.

993), and "Fomalhaut" (V. 430), says he does not know what they refer to.

IX. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — "Sordello" as a Work of Art.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is "Sordello" an example of the hopelessness of a young and original poet's attempting to follow the admonishment of critics, since in deference to them he tried to make descriptive and analytic a creative design which the bent of his mind could but make dramatic at times, and the harder at other times for his narrative explanations? (As in the digression of Book III., and in Book I. in which he evidently tries to supply the reader with author's preface, stage setting, and *dramatis personæ*, and general plan of the period and the part the hero is to play.)

"Is it good (I ask, as one unversed in technical construction)," says Mr. Nettleship, "that the history should be told as it is backwards? The opening scene occurs just before Sordello's death; and when we are already somewhat exhausted with the effort of understanding that opening scene, we are ruthlessly hurried back to the beginning of the real action of the story."

How does this mode strike you after you have the clew that these opening lines are as it were picturesque stage directions? Compare with George Eliot's "Daniel Deronda," which gives as prelude a scene in advance of the opening of the story as a foretaste of the heroine's quality. And after you understand that Sordello is to be a type of the class of poet who, like Browning, combines with the insight of the subjective poet the social instinct and creative faculty of the dramatic poet, does the digression in Book III. strike you as inappropriate?

Mr. Mabie, in his *Essay on Robert Browning* in "Essays in Literary Criticism," p. 137, says " 'Sordello' is distinctly defective as a work of art because the conception was evidently not mastered at the start; and the undeniable confusion and obscurity of the poem are due largely to this offence against the primary law of art."

How can it be proved that the conception was not mastered at the start? Mr. Mabie says "evidently," and gives no further information. Does the poem supply any evidence that the poet had from the start a conception of what he meant to do? And does that conception itself, because of its largeness, account for some of the difficulties of its readers?

Are the artistic defects of "Sordello" in great measure the results of its peculiar quality as a creative work, — *i. e.* its design to show the development of such a poet as Sordello, who was not merely a poet but potentially a social leader, and to show this development with relation to a chaotic period which initiated a long-reaching political movement?

What relation to the design of "Sordello" has the passage bringing in the idea of the Incarnation? Should it be taken theologically and literally as Browning's expression of Sordello's need of Christ?

Dr. C. C. Everett, in the second of his papers on "Sordello" (*Poet-love*, Vol. VIII., p. 320), says:

"I am not sure that this last passage does not give what was, in the author's mind, the culmination and significance of the whole poem. It points to the divine-human revelation which might bring peace and guidance into the troubled and doubtful lives of men . . . Sordello had felt that the failure of his life had been caused by the lack of some overmastering and

directing power. . . . However this may be, the apostrophe was introduced with marvellous rhetorical skill. It distracts our attention from Sordello at the very moment when his mental struggle reached its crisis."

Is it better to take this passage symbolically? Is it Browning's explanation of what Sordello needed to enable him to unite the ideal with the practical for the service of mankind, made known to the reader through the use of the idea of the Incarnation as a symbol of a like union between the divine and the human for the service of mankind? Love enabled the divine mediation, stooping to the flesh. Love was what Sordello needed to give his will the ardor and patience necessary to shape his theories toward practical action for the betterment of the people crushed between rival cruelties.

If this idea of the Incarnation is a symbol directly applicable here, is it an apostrophe not meant to distract, but rather to attract attention to the crisis in Sordello's mental struggle?

Is it an artistic error to introduce dramatic and lyric insets in the structure of a poem professedly narrative? Or do these give it vividness, color, and music, so that with all its difficulties it is sure to be found alluring? Notice that even in the digression in Book III. it does not suffice the poet to digress by one mouth, he holds dialogues with various imagined auditors and with his poetic mistress, Humanity, and takes her on his knee, and dries her eyes, too; and he writes specimen poems for three different poets.

Do the couplet rhymes of the pentameter verse make one "dizzy in whirling after them," as a speaker once complained in a London Browning Society discussion,

and are they therefore to be condemned, or are they a proof of the young writer's vigor and fluency ?

Is the imagery strikingly uncommon, beautiful, and at times bizarre ? Or is it too unusual and bizarre to be easily followed, and therefore to be condemned ?

Is the artistic complexity of "Sordello," in general, so diverse as to prevent it from living long as a poetic creation ? Or is it likely to attract interest increasingly on account of its extraordinary richness ?

## SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "STRAFFORD"

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I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — England's Fate: Will Strafford Side with King or People? (Act I. For digests of this and following acts, and historical allusions throughout, see *Camberwell Browning*, as cited above; for general criticism, Introduction, pp. vii, viii, xi-xviii.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — How does this act illustrate the political situation in England at the time of the opening of the play? — through description, mainly, or through character-painting and incidental description? Which method do you think more dramatic?

Is the view given in scene i. too much broken up to be intelligible, or the more vivid for being the subject of dialogue? Even Shakespeare sometimes explains his situations by putting a description of events preceding the action in the mouth of one actor telling another (see, in "The Tempest," Prospero's description to Miranda; in "Cymbeline," the first gentleman's description of affairs to second gentleman); and in many other lesser but able dramatists it is often done. Is it a good way, because it is unmistakable;



or is the way of doing this, indirectly, — through depicting the impressions and apprehensions the situation has upon the characters who will initiate the action, — better because more dramatic, even if it does require more alertness on the part of the auditors to gather up the clews? If so, why is it more dramatic? Because more like life, more bound up with different human personalities and points of view?

Freytag (in his "Technique of the Drama," p. 19) points out, what is often mistakenly regarded in common talk and criticism upon Browning and other modern dramatists, that "action, in itself, is not dramatic. Passionate feeling in itself is not dramatic. The depicting of thrilling events is the task of the epic poet; the exposition of passionate emotions, as such, is in the province of the lyric poet. Not the presentation of a passion for itself, but of a passion which leads to action, is the business of dramatic art; not the presentation of an event for itself, but for its effect on a human soul, is the dramatist's mission."

Does "Strafford" indicate, from its start in Act I., that it is designed to show the action in its effect on human souls, and the progress of the action through the effect on it of changing human character? For example, the first scene indicates, does it not, that the coming action involving England's fate depends upon the character of Wentworth with relation to the characters of Pym on the one side, and Charles on the other. Is it the effect of Pym's character, the prestige of his opinion and capability, on Hampden first, and, secondarily, on the others, which restrains them from taking the violent action they would otherwise be led to adopt because of the effect upon them of Wentworth's character, and their apprehensions of

what he can do for the King and against England? Is this way of illustrating the action a necessary result of the actual facts and of modern conditions in general? — Since if it were a case of conspiracy and assassination of Wentworth, a deed would be the direct consequence of that first scene, but as it is a case of slower legal action and sentence (such as belonged to the fact, and, in general, must belong to such action under the conditions of modern civilization), action in character is the next step towards initiating the climax.

Is it shallow criticism, then, to object to "Strafford" because, as its author himself says, it is a drama of "Action in Character rather than Character in Action"? Or, if it is legitimate criticism, must the drama be confined to the portrayal of external deeds brought about exclusively by force or by external means of action? And must the most characteristic activities of modern life taking place under modern conditions, therefore, be debarred from dramatic rendering; and only past events of more heroic days, or the same kind of events, — nowadays in bad odor and called criminal rather than heroic, — be considered fit for the stage?

Is the same method of elucidating the action by showing character incubating the course it will take, followed in the second scene? And does this come out through the relations of Lady Carlisle, Wentworth, Pym, and Charles, in that scene, as, in the first scene, through the relations of the Parliamentarians to Pym and Pym to Wentworth?

Is Hampden weak because he relied so much on Pym? Is Pym weak because he put his trust in Wentworth, and would not undertake his task for England until he was assured Wentworth would not?

Was it entirely love for their friends that so influenced them, or also love for England? Is love a weakening emotion?

In Wentworth's case was it love for Charles that influenced him mainly, and did he choose him instead of the People; or does the poet hint that his idea was to unify the people under Charles?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Strafford's Ministry: His Fate one with the King's. (Act II.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Does Strafford's policy change still further with this act after the scene with the King? And is it a change that is a natural result of his character and his devotion to the King, in relation with the King's character? Having attempted to guide the King, he finds that he must now make the best of the King's acts, whatever they are.

Is he justly called the "great Apostate"?

Concerning his apostasy, Mr. H. D. Trail, in his "Life of Strafford," says, in brief: —

"The most credible explanation [of his political change] is not the most creditable; the most excusatory is the least convincing. In supporting the Parliamentarians, in 1628, he was either sincere or not. If sincere, (1) he may have become convinced that his views were mistaken and his party dangerous; (2) he may have yielded to Charles because fascinated by him, and espousing his cause in the hope to accommodate the legitimate claims of royal prerogative with the rightful liberties of the subject; (3) he may have been bribed. Or, if never sincere, his action in 1628 was in order to show his value during preferment."

In the Life of Strafford in Forster's "Eminent British Statesmen" (which has been suspected to be in part Browning's, a collaboration confirmed by Elizabeth Barrett's remarks about the book in the "Love Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett"), still another view of Wentworth's apostasy appears in a passage bearing every mark of having been written by Browning: "All Wentworth's movements appear to be perfectly natural and intelligible if his true character be kept in view. From the very intensity of the aristocratic principle within him, arose his hesitation in espousing at once the interests of the court. This, justly and carefully considered, will be found the solution of his reluctant advances and still more reluctant retreats. The intervention of a favorite [Buckingham] was hardly supportable by one whose ambition would be satisfied with nothing short of the dignity of becoming 'the King's mistress, to be cherished and courted by none but himself' . . . Wentworth's conduct, at the last, was forced upon him by circumstances: but his energetic support of the Petition of Rights was only the completion of a series of hints, all of which had been more or less intelligible . . . Even in all these circumstances, when many steps were forced upon him, which his proud spirit but poorly submitted to, and wronged itself in submitting to, it is yet possible to perceive a quality in his nature which was afterward more fully developed. . . . In one word, what it is desired to impress upon the reader, before the delineation of Wentworth in his after-years, is this — *that he was consistent to himself throughout*. I have always considered that much good wrath is thrown away upon what is usually

called 'apostasy.' In the majority of cases, if the circumstances are thoroughly examined, it will be found that there has been 'no such thing' . . . those who carry their researches into the moral nature of mankind, cannot do better than impress upon their minds, at the outset, that in the regions they explore, they are to expect no monsters . . . Let him [Wentworth] be judged sternly, but in no unphilosophic spirit. In turning from the bright band of patriot brothers to the solitary Strafford — 'a star which dwelt apart' — we have to contemplate no extinguished splendour, razed and blotted from the book of life. Lustrous, indeed, as was the gathering of the lights in the political heaven of this great time, even that radiant cluster might have exulted in the accession of the 'comet beautiful and fierce,' which tarried awhile within its limits ere it 'dashed athwart with train of flame.' But it was governed by other laws than were owned by its golden associates, and — impelled by a contrary yet no less irresistible force, than that which restrained them within their eternal orbits — it left them, never to 'float into that azure heaven again.' "

Is this the impression the play presents? And what other points of view contribute their light upon Strafford's character, and in what way do they reinforce the general picture? What was Pym's opinion of him, and Lady Carlisle's? — the younger Vane's, the elder Vane's, and that of the Court party?

What has Lady Carlisle to do with the action? Has her character any importance in its action upon Strafford's and the King's? (See especially the second scene of this act, 217-221, and Lady Carlisle's aside, 225-228; also remarks on Lady Carlisle in

*Camberwell Browning*, Vol. II., Introduction, pp. xii-xvii, and Notes, p. 292.)

Is the climax of this act reached when Strafford throws himself into the breach to cover the King's confusion, as Pym and his friends enter and interrupt Strafford's reproaches? Or when Pym calls upon Strafford to keep tryst? Is it a mistake to identify Vane with the menace of the future against Strafford, for which Pym stands at this point? Or is this quick speech of Vane's in keeping every way first as irrepressible, if Vane was present, who spoke moreover for the party back of Pym, and, second, as contrasting with the impulsive character of Vane the slow and cautious but steadfast character of England's champion? How do you interpret Pym's words (159-161)? Do they throw any light on the motive of his previous reluctance to move against Strafford till he was sure he did not mean England well?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Impeachment: Pym for the People *versus* Strafford for the King. (Act III.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — What are the springs of the action in this act? Do they all develop legitimately from the last? Is it action in the character of Pym which now brings about the clash between the new political movement on whose behalf he acts, and Strafford, whom he singles out as leader for the King? What other factors have their share in the clash, and are they all motivated dramatically in the same way, *i. e.*, do they proceed from human will into outward act, instead of the contrary? How is it with the Court party and the Queen? Their enmity now became more active than before against Strafford. Is this underplotting of theirs a



needless complexity in the plot; or a necessary element in it? If so, why? Does it unfold from the action in Strafford's character, in relation with the King's, since the more closely he binds himself to the King, the more he rouses the jealousy of the Court as well as the opposition of the Parliamentarians? Could the King have taken counteraction at once against the threatened impeachment? And if so, is his passivity at this point the root of the action? What had the Queen to do with it?

All influences of character and human will in the play, as well as in its events — the reverses his army meets with the Scots — converge here against Strafford. Lady Carlisle's intervention with the Queen is in vain. How is it, then, that Strafford makes any stand at all, and what is to hinder the play from ending here? Is it well managed that Strafford should seem to stem the tide alone? Is this next step rooted in "action in character" also? Strafford's ambition, which seemed the strongest element in his aims at first, made him in Act I. desire to guide the King's course; in Act II. his personal loyalty and love for the King become dominant and make him desire to retrieve the King's blunders; despairing to guide, he is content to make the best of the King's way. Now, in Act III., the pressure of the crisis develops another phase of his character, its supreme ability and will-power. As he tells Lady Carlisle, in scene ii. 150-162, "he tried obedience thoroughly," and suffered the results when he "took the King's wild plan;" then he resolved to take his own lead henceforth. So, at this instant of greatest peril, Strafford gives the impression of greatest strength.

Prof. S. R. Gardiner points out (Introduction to



Miss Hickey's "Strafford," pp. ix-xiv) that Browning brought out the moral qualities of his hero by strengthening "whatever personal feeling may have entwined itself in the political attachment between Strafford and Charles . . . till it becomes the very basis of Strafford's life, the keynote of his character." It remained for the poet, adds Professor Gardiner, "to impress his readers with Strafford's intellectual greatness. The historian who tries to do that will have much to say on his constitutional views and his Irish government, but a dramatist who tried to follow in such a path would only make himself ridiculous. Mr. Browning understood the force of the remark of the Greek philosopher, that Homer makes us realize Helen's beauty most, by speaking of the impression which it made upon the old men who looked on her. Mr. Browning brings out Strafford's greatness by showing the impression which he made on Pym and Lady Carlisle."

True and penetrating as this is, is it all that Browning does to bring home to his auditors a sense of Strafford's ability? Do the impressions of his character here spoken of belong to the earlier periods of the play, and refer rather more to Pym's clinging belief in his disinterestedness, and to Lady Carlisle's conviction, almost fear of his loyalty, than to the high opinion they have of his power? The fear his enemies have of him, Vane and Rudyard on the one side, and his Court rivals on the other, testify more especially to his intellectual power, do they not? What does this act do to bring these impressions to a climax, and make Strafford seem most formidable when most alone and most threatened?

Is it a mistake to create a hero not dominated by

a single unchanging purpose? And having shown him as passing through successive phases of attitude towards Charles and his own career, till he seems supreme, what dramatic purpose is served by making his downfall at the close of the third act so abject? Is his accusation that the King has trapped him inconsistent with his devotion? Why from the impulse to suicide does he change to submission?

Is the scene at cross purposes between Lady Carlisle and Strafford — when she is talking about his impeachment, and he is talking about that of his enemies — unnecessarily blind? Is it artificial or natural?

Is it a stage slip to put an attractive woman in so unpleasant a position as she holds? Or is Professor Gardiner right in showing the dramatic purpose of this when he says that what Browning needs “is her admiration of Strafford, not Strafford’s admiration of her. He takes care to show that she was not, as vulgar rumour supposed, Strafford’s mistress. The impression of Strafford’s greatness is brought more completely home to the spectator or the reader, because of the effect which it produces upon one who has given her heart without return.” (As to Strafford’s own testimony to Lady Carlisle in her relations with him, see quotation, *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. II., close of note on II. 3, p. 293.)

IV. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Trial: The Issue Trembles in the Balance. (Act IV.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is it consistent in Hollis as a Parliamentary and, so, against the prerogative of the King, to be so sarcastic about the King’s non-intervention on Strafford’s behalf? Or is his view in the first scene of Act IV.

one which rates the King as low as he would any other man who lets another suffer in his stead? But is not a king excusable for expecting such loyalty and accepting it? Is not humanity at large more to blame than the King for nursing in him the idea that his life transcends all other lives? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. II., Introduction, p. xvii.)

Is Society as guilty under republican as under monarchical government of asserting its right that individuals should be its scapegoats?

Is Lady Carlisle a true royalist? Does Browning do well to make her revolt against all her antecedents and bringing-up in this scene? (See her aside, lines 116-121.)

What is Browning's object in representing the trial by anteroom scenes, bustle, and messengers to and fro, and broken description of what happens inside the great Hall, instead of presenting Westminster Hall itself?

Is the formal pomp of such scenes on the stage apt to look theatrically stiff and hollow to the modern eye? And is it appropriate with the design of the play that the trial scene is conducted as it is, as suggested in the introduction (*Camberwell Browning*, Vol. II., p. xviii)? Or is here an opportunity lost for enriching the play with an imposing spectacle? But even from the spectacular point of view was it better not to spoil with a repetition the spectacle of the House of Lords in full conclave suddenly presented at the close of the third act, as the doors open wide, and Strafford kneels? Is this brief glimpse of the Hall and the judges who are to hear the case, and whom Strafford then recognizes as symbolic of England, the more effective for its briefness? Above all, is it better *in this place* than it could be in a fourth act? For it is to be remem-

bered, of course, that this act following the third, which properly exhibits the climax, presents the downward movement, about to culminate in the fifth act, as hovering between the hero's fall or rescue.

Has Browning overburdened the chances for Strafford's rescue by doubling his opportunities for escape, first opening the possibility of bringing up the army to force his deliverance, and then the second possibility of the charges falling through because of Strafford's able refutation? Or has he made the most skilful use of the actual facts in the case (see Notes, *Camberwell Browning*), and so as to show incidentally, also, in the strongest light the characters of the King and Strafford; and the dominance of Pym over the whole action as well as over Strafford's single-handed, almost successful deliverance of himself? What dramatic advantage is there in making Vane, Rudyard, Fiennes, all turn against Pym and Hampden in demurring against the Bill of Attainder? Is it to isolate Pym as the paramount man, again, on his side; just as Strafford is isolated on the other side, by making him return the King's scheme and stand in solitary strength against his destiny?

"The most difficult part of the drama," Freytag reminds his readers ("Technique of the Drama," p. 133) "is the sequence of scenes in the downward movement . . . specially in powerful plays, in which the heroes are the directing force, do these dangers enter most. Up to the climax, the interest has been firmly fixed in the direction in which the chief characters are moving. . . . A pause ensues. Suspense must now be excited in what is new. For this new forces, perhaps new rôles must be introduced . . . On account of this there is already danger in distraction and the breaking

up of scenic effects. And yet, it must be added, the hostility of the counter party toward the hero cannot always be easily concentrated in one person nor in one situation; sometimes it is necessary to show how frequently, now and again, it beats upon the soul of the hero; and in this way in contrast with the unity and firm advance of the first half of the play, the second may be ruptured, in many parts, restless; this is particularly the case with historical subjects, where it is most difficult to compose the counter-party of a few characters only. And yet the return demands a strong bringing out and intensifying of the scenic effects, on account of the satisfaction already accorded the hearer, and on account of the greater significance of the struggle. Therefore the first law for the construction . . . is that the number of persons be limited as much as possible, and that the effects be comprised in great scenes. All the art of technique, all the power of invention, are necessary to insure here an advance in interest . . . Only great strokes, great effects. Even the episodes must have a certain significance, a certain energy."

In the light of these remarks on fourth-act construction, admittedly one of the fine points in dramaturgy, what do you think of the way in which Browning has effected a gradual isolation of Strafford on the one side and Pym on the other? Notice that he has done this despite the new forces introduced which might have deterred or complicated the action. How has he woven, moreover, into the closer identification of Pym and Strafford with the opposing policies they represent, an increasing significance? In what does this significance consist? And where does it come out the strongest?

The King's scheme to bring up the army was, historically, the turning-point in Strafford's destiny. (See note 88, p. 303, *Camberwell Browning*.) Is it such that it could be made use of on the stage as well as that which Browning substituted for it; and after all, if it could be made use of, would it take the place of the prior inner history of the relation of the King to the Bill of Attainder and Strafford's execution, as well as scene iii. does?

"Twice in the course of a week [April, 1641] Pym was admitted to the King," records Gardiner in his *History*. "What passed between them we have no means of knowing."

The last of these interviews Browning has imagined for us, and in it he has motived the catastrophe of "Strafford" which ensues in the last act. Is Pym's grimness as the embodiment of England's will but made the more awful for the personal tenderness of his warning to the King, "as man to man," and the desperation of Charles's reply (69-83)? Is it strange or natural that Pym should be ready to save the King at such cost?

After this boldly significant scene, is Lady Carlisle's entrance and speech a futility, a weakness, or a spiritual relief? Does she understand? Is her intuition as perfect as ever?

V. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study*. — Pym Acts for England: Strafford Dies for the King. (Act V.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion*. — Why is the first scene of this act again with Lady Carlisle? Is it to explain what was left hanging at the close of Act IV.? Should it have been left so? Why? Is it merely a trick to turn the auditor's interest anew



and unnecessarily to the act whose catastrophe is certain? What reasons underlie it? Is it desirable, æsthetically, that the gentle and the compassionate and the noble should weave some charm about the coming tragedy? And what value, from the point of view of character, has the representation of all this in Lady Carlisle's person?

Freytag (p. 136) reminds the playwright that "it is hazardous to hasten to the end without interruption. Just at the time when the weight of an evil destiny has long burdened the hero, for whom the active sympathy of the audience is hoping relief, although rational consideration makes the inherent necessity of his destruction very evident, — in such a case, it is an old unpretentious device, to give the audience for a few moments a prospect of relief . . . the dying Edmund must revoke the command to kill Lear; Father Lorenzo may still enter before the moment when Romeo kills himself; . . . Macbeth is still invulnerable from any man born of woman even when Birnam Wood is approaching. . . . Yet it requires a fine sensibility to make good use of this force. It must not be insignificant or it will not have the desired effect; it must be made to grow out of the action and out of the characters; it must not come out so prominently that it essentially changes the relative position of the parties. Above the rising possibility, the spectator must always perceive the downward compelling force of what has preceded."

Does this scene fulfil Freytag's requirements judiciously?

"The last act gathers to a focus all the sunny threads of human interest that irradiate the play. Lady Carlisle's affection plans Strafford's escape from



the Tower, while he sits in prison with his children about him, for a breathing-space at peace, in a happy island of childish song and prattle." ("Dramatic Motive in Browning's 'Strafford,' " *Poet-lore*, Vol. V., pp. 515-526, October, 1893.)

Are these two children lifelike? Do they differ in character? Is the scene overwrought in its patheticness, or the right foil for the coming scaffold scene?

In introducing the King in the guise of Hollis's cloaked attendant, has the dramatist made Royalty needlessly weak or more poignantly pitiable? Does Strafford guess who he is, before he is made known? Is the scene needlessly prolonged, or is it worked up to give the more effectively Strafford's last act of generous loyalty, — to bless the King? Has Browning overwrought the figure of Strafford here with exaggerated nobility? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. II., Note 138, p. 307.) Or is his refusal to attempt escape lest it would stain his children, but his agreement to sacrifice their honor for his King's safety, a stroke too much of the willing sacrifice? Is Browning ethically right in portraying such a man so attractively?

Why is Pym less attractive? Is he not equally disinterested and devoted? Is the tragically heroic or the successfully heroic, in general, more attractive?

Should Pym's speech be shortened here, as some persons have held? Is Strafford's foreboding of their meeting a superstitious or a natural one?

Should the last dialogue between Pym and Strafford have been given without historical warrant for its having taken place? What part does it play in the design of the drama as a whole? Whether Pym and Strafford ever said a word about the future possibilities

of Pym's again acting for England and Charles being beheaded this time, were such facts not implied in their present relation ?

Is "Strafford" undramatic because its interest is political ?

"The interest of politics is mainly indirect. Strafford is impeached, not merely because he is hated, or because he has done evil things, but because he is expected to do more evil things," writes Professor Gardiner. "Such possibilities of future evil, which the historian is bound to consider, are, however, essentially undramatic. The poet can at most only avail himself of them as a background for the scenes in which the characters or the passions of his personages are developed. Still less can he bring upon the stage personages who discuss the bearing and meaning of acts of Parliament, as Pym and Strafford did in real life. . . . From beginning to the end of the play the personal relations between the actors are exaggerated at the expense of the political."

But is it not truer to say that the political relations are those that have been exaggerated, and that the proper proportions of the two have been restored to their right dimensions and relationship ? In taking this way to meet the difficulties of his subject, which Professor Gardiner of course approves in the poet, has the way been taken not merely to meet the technical and literary difficulties, but to give back to the political and historical conditions and their outcome, as we have them drily recorded, the primary source of their existence ? Whether actually just as presented in Browning's play or not, life and the personal relations of real characters influencing events were originally behind all such social movements.

“Such movements are, after all, not impersonal but personal” (article before cited, “Dramatic Motive in Browning’s ‘Strafford,’” p. 517). “They are the complex issue of many human wills. Personality, then, really holds sway over the ‘possibilities of the future,’ as it does over the private course of every single action in the struggle. The poet’s use, therefore, in this play, of these ‘possibilities of the future’ is not abstract and historical, but living and dramatic.”

Why then, if so originally motivated in life and so represented in the play, are they not admirably suited for dramatic material?

Is the idea that they are not, a literary prejudice?

## SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "PIPPA PASSES"

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I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Dramatic Motive and its Movement in "Pippa Passes."

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — The dramatic motive of "Pippa Passes" is the conflict of unconscious Good with Evil. The Good in the person of Pippa appears first upon the scene. How are her relations with Evil foreshadowed in the first scene? Interpreted in the light of her goodness, how do the various people upon whose lives she is to have so great an influence appear to her?

The first evil she comes in contact with is that of a terrible crime already accomplished. Has she any sort of external relation with either of the parties to this crime?

Is Pippa's influence upon Sebald altogether for good? (See opinion expressed in Introduction to Vol. I., *Camberwell Browning*.) Does she have any direct influence on Ottima? or is Ottima only affected through Sebald? Is the instantaneous effect of Pippa on Sebald probably due to the fact that he had already begun to repent his deed?

Ottima being stronger than Sebald in sacrificing all moral considerations to her love, is she also stronger in her repentance?

Why do you suppose the wicked students who were plotting against Jules were not affected when Pippa passed singing?

The evil Pippa next comes in contact with is not that of the actors in a crime, but of the dupes in a crime. Does the influence of her song then consist in its arousing Jules to a higher ideal of life than he had ever before conceived of? Does it have any effect on Phene, or is she, too, influenced only by Jules? Would Jules so easily have been affected by Pippa's song if he had not already loved Phene, and been ready to take a view of the situation which would save her?

Up to this point has there been any indication that evil influences were at work against Pippa? What comes out about this in the talk of Bluphocks and the policemen? Why is it that Pippa's song does not effect any change of heart in the villain Bluphocks?

In the case of Luigi, there is no crime for which repentance is necessary, no higher ideal to be aroused, only a purpose which has wavered through temptation, to be strengthened. Does Pippa's song have any effect upon Luigi's mother?

In the scene with the street-girls, how does the plot thicken about Pippa?

Finally, in the scene with the Monsignor, the evil influences about Pippa culminate. In this do we get the first hint as to who she really is and why evil has been plotted against her? In this case her influence is exerted to prevent a crime, and that crime is against herself.

Tracing the movement all through, at which points does her influence attain its greatest power, and at

which points its least? Is it harder to prevent a crime, as she did in the case of the Monsignor, or to cause repentance, as in the case of Sebald? Is it harder to strengthen a wavering purpose, as she did in the case of Luigi, or to arouse a new ideal, as in the case of Jules?

Was the crime contemplated against herself the climax of the evils with which she came in contact, or only the climax in relation to herself?

Can the climaxes and denouement in this drama be compared with the conventional conduct of a drama? According to the accepted rules of drama, the first act should strike the keynote of the action, which is unfolded in the second act, while in the third there is a clash of the different elements of the action making a climax; in the fourth the elements of the action are quieter, but slowly gather strength for the final climax and denouement in the fifth act.

May each episode up to the last one be said to have its own minor dramatic motive, which does not come in contact with the main dramatic motive except at the crucial moment of Pippa's passing?

In the scene preliminary to the episode of Luigi and his mother, although the plot begins to thicken about Pippa, it is kept perfectly distinct, is it not, from the following episode, with which she has the same connection as in the preceding ones?

Is the last scene where Pippa returns to her room in the nature of an epilogue, or is it a needed part of the action to bring the chief actor in the drama prominently forward again, and, furthermore, to emphasize the fact of her isolation, and unconsciousness of the part she has been playing in the dramas of Asolo and the drama of her own life?

In making her influence felt more in some cases

than in others and not felt at all in some, do you suppose Browning means to indicate that the seed of goodness must fall upon ground that is ready to receive it, else it will be of no avail?

Do you think the words of Pippa's songs would have had as much of an effect, if purity and goodness had not breathed through Pippa's voice?

While this drama does not have the interplay of characters, and the complexities of plot usual to most dramas, do you not find it presents a very vivid and realistic picture of life in a town, just because of the isolation of the different groups from each other, and Pippa's isolation from all?

Slight as each episode is, does not each one imply possibilities of a complete phase of existence, — first, a rich plebeian class, with its selfishness leading to crime; next, an artist class with its jealousies leading to revenge; third, a noble class with its high motives leading to patriotism; fourth, a pampered religious class with its greed leading to crime?

Are all these pictures true to the Italy of that time? (For hints, see Thayer's "The Dawn of Italian Independence;" Cesaresco's "The Liberation of Italy.")

Has the poem any other basis in reality than is given it by its geographical and historical atmospheres?

Of its inception Mrs. Orr tells that Browning "was walking alone in a wood near Dulwich when the image flashed upon him of some one walking thus alone through life; one apparently too obscure to leave a trace of his or her passage, yet exercising a lasting though unconscious influence at every step of it; and the image shaped itself into the little silk-winder of Asolo."



II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Character Groups.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Does Browning mean to portray in Pippa an ordinary child, or a child of unusual artistic ability, as well as of a natural aspiration toward goodness and an unquestioning faith in God's love?

Is her goodness that of innocence, or does she with full knowledge prefer goodness to badness?

Pippa has been criticised as being too developed in her reasoning, her observation, her choice of language, and the style of her songs. Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman declares that she "talks like a Paracelsus in pantalettes."

When you come to analyze these points, do you find her philosophy so very complex, her observation extend beyond the range of her daily life, her language introducing any images or references beyond the realm of her experience?

Upon this point Mrs. Isabel Francis Bellows, in an article on "Pippa Passes" (*Poet-love*, Vol. VI., p. 133, March, 1894), says: "Pippa is the nearest, I think, to the Shakespearian woman, in the simplicity of her soul and the directness of her aims, but her holiday pleasures are purely and consciously intellectual; she does look before and after, and she does at times speak pure Browning. Admitting this, we are not, however, compelled to admit that she is a Paracelsus in pantalettes; her thoughts are not at all the thoughts of Paracelsus, and like Shakespeare's Perdita, Pippa is of a noble race. Pippa's thoughts do not, perhaps, transcend her breeding more than those of Perdita; and the two high-born, low-bred maidens have much in common, in their love of nature and flowers, their

bright innocence and gayety, and their trustful courage and faith. A special characteristic of Pippa is her great purity, which carries her unscathed through all the dangers and snares that beset her path. It is not the cow-like innocence of Eve, for Pippa possesses a knowledge of good and evil . . . She recognizes the relations between Ottima and Sebald, and criticises the holy Monsignor's air of pride with a kind of broad tolerance that would be unusual in a young girl, if it were not that she is possessed of the wisdom drawn from the self-denial and austerity of her life." (See also opinion expressed in Introduction to Vol. I., *Camberwell Browning*. For a hint as to her age, see scene with Monsignor.)

Which has the more intense and the more sincere nature, Sebald or Ottima?

Is Sebald so upset by his deed that for the time being he is almost out of his mind?

Which of the following opinions do you feel to be the most just?

Mr. Symons's, — "The representation of Ottima and Sebald, the Italian and the German, is a singularly acute study of the Italian and the German races. Sebald, in a sudden access of brutal rage, has killed the old doting husband, but his conscience, too feeble to stay his hand before, is awake to torture him after the deed. But Ottima is steadfast in evil, with the Italian conscienceless resoluteness. She can no more feel either fear or remorse than Clytemnestra."

Mr. Fotheringham's, — "Sin is horrible, and the strong, just, divine order rules, calm and mighty. Sebald kills himself in his remorse, and Ottima shows the nobler side of passion in possible self-sacrifice."

Professor Walker's (Greater Victorian Poets), —

“In more respects than one this grand sketch challenges comparison with the play of ‘Macbeth’. . . Browning agrees with Shakespeare in representing the woman as less remorseful after the crime than the man . . . Lady Macbeth for a great ambition and Ottima for a great love determine upon a crime. The whole being of each is absorbed in the one idea. There is no other way but crime to the end, or none which headlong impatience will consider. The end they have determined upon they must have, and they accept the means to it. Not that they do not feel the crime: Lady Macbeth’s sleep-walking scene proves how deeply she felt it. But while her mind retains its balance she resolutely turns her face away from the crime, and in the case of Ottima there is never a hint that she wishes the past undone . . . Ottima loves Sebald better for the crime, she justifies it, she is quite unmoved by the song of Pippa. What does stir her is not the crime, but the sense to which she soon awakes that Sebald’s love is gone, . . . Sebald’s whole nature is not immersed in the crime: it has only stained, not drenched his mind. Nor does he, like Ottima, find in his passion the full satisfaction of his entire being.”

(See also opinion expressed in Introduction to Vol. I., *Camberwell Browning*.)

Does Phene convince you of the innate purity of her soul in spite of the life she had been forced to lead?

Does the action of Jules seem to be almost too exalted to be possible, or is it just what one would expect of any just and high-minded man?

Mary R. Baldwin, writing in *Poet-love* on Jules and Du Maurier’s “Little Billee” (Vol. IX., p. 575,

Oct.-Dec. 1897) says: "The Jules of 'Pippa Passes' — who finds his Psyche baffling his best efforts toward expression, always eluding the most skilful strokes of his chisel, and who, by virtue of his high ideals and unbending purpose to reach them and his refusal to debase his thought of womanhood, has directed toward himself the hatred of his fellow artists, because their aims are low — becomes in Browning's hands a masterpiece whose awful experience of defeat is made his opportunity. Phene, the model, offered by the vicious leader among Jules's enemies for the purpose of insulting his standards and entrapping him into a degrading marriage, also with the hope of ruining him in his career as an artist, suddenly, under the influence of his nature, feels within her the flutter of her soul. The sensitive spirit of the artist springs to the recognition of the idea of an imprisoned Psyche appealing to him for release, and his whole self is filled with a longing to free it. He will break all the statues to which he has given long days and months of labor, and surrender himself to the divine impulse of trying to develop a human soul, living apart, with nothing to vitiate his purest and deepest impressions of art."

From Luigi's conversation do you get the impression that he was an impulsive and enthusiastic young man, with a great love of nature and the beautiful things of life?

Does the proposed murder of the King seem a crime, as he views it?

Do you get the impression that his mother is really arguing with him as to the merits of his proposed action, or that, her mind already made up against it, she is trying tactfully to draw him away from it with-

out rousing his opposition by decided opposition on her part?

Does she do it so cleverly that if it had not been for Pippa's song she might have succeeded in dissuading Luigi?

Was the Intendant not justified in thinking that the Monsignor would fall an easy prey to his proposition, considering the sort of proposition the Monsignor had just made to him?

Of the array of villains in this play which appears to you to be the worst one?

Among the slighter groups of characters which two show signs of regeneration?

The only woman in the play besides Pippa who exerts any influence is Phene; is that because men are more likely to be influenced by the presence of goodness than by intellectual persuasion such as that used by Ottima and Luigi's mother?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— Artistic Effects.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Do the irregularities in the verse used by Pippa suit well with her childlikeness and her changes of mood, sometimes gay, sometimes grave?

Intensity and rapidity are the qualities of the scene between Sebald and Ottima; how is this accomplished?

Is there a calm sense of joyousness expressed in the talk of Jules before Pippa sings? Is the artist soul revealed in all his references and allusions?

Is there any change in the style after Pippa sings?

With Luigi and his mother we seem to get the impression of a suppressed calm before a heart-rending calamity. How is this produced? By his seeming indifference to her, and her emotional restraint?

Do these effects of style come out partly through the language used and partly in the management of the metre ?

Do the several lapses into prose add to the artistic contrasts, and bear out still further the suiting of style to the characters ?

Of the lyrics in the poem can all be said to have a distinctive charm based upon different qualities of thought and mood and style ?

Does the poem *Phene repeats* have also its charm as a dramatically expressed mood of fiendishness ?

Of this play Mr. Symons says : " It is Mr. Browning's most perfect work. As a whole, he has never written anything to equal it in artistic symmetry ; while a single scene — that between *Ottima* and *Sebald* — reaches the highest level of tragic utterance which he has ever attained."

Does this opinion show more appreciation of the possibilities in new forms of art than the following by Professor Walker ? — " The repetition of the device, and the externality of the relation between *Pippa* and the other characters stamp the work as a phantasy, and deprive it of all right to compete, as a whole, with the great triumphs of art ; though, as a detached passage, the one scene of *Ottima* and *Sebald* will bear comparison with any."

## SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES"

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*Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* —  
Motive and Interplay of Character.

*Questions for Investigation and Discussion.* — Might the motive of this play be described as the influence of a deep filial love and loyalty to the King upon character?

Has the play any plot interest?

Does the interest depend chiefly upon the situations growing out of mental misunderstandings between the characters?

The play opens with a conversation between Charles and Polyxena in which he indulges in reminiscences of his past life and complaints of the life they are now forced to lead. Upon what historical facts is this conversation based, and how has Browning enlarged upon them? (For hints on this and other historical points, see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. I., Notes, pp. 329-331 fol.)

What preliminary impressions as to the characteristics of Charles and Polyxena, and their relations to each other, do you get from this conversation?



In the scene between D'Ormea, Charles, and Polyxena which follows, is D'Ormea already trying to befriend Charles, or is he thinking solely of protecting himself from the odium that will fall upon him for Victor's deeds if Victor abdicates?

Is Charles's misunderstanding of D'Ormea and his wrong conclusions as to the King's scheme due to his stupidity, to his morbid depreciation of himself, or to the fact that his mind was prepossessed with the idea that D'Ormea would give him counsel only with the intention of harming him?

Does Charles, in spite of his own fears of his father's designs, show irritation at any one's else suspicion of him?

Does Polyxena show greater intelligence than Charles in doubting that Charles's conclusions as to his father's purposes are right?

Part II. opens with a soliloquy by Victor, continuing with a conversation between Victor and D'Ormea preparatory to the scene of the abdication; what information as to the state of affairs and as to D'Ormea's history comes out, and how much of it is based upon fact?

Does Victor show himself absolutely selfish and callous?

Does D'Ormea speak the truth when he tells Charles he has pleaded wholly in his interest? Or did he, in speaking for himself, do by the way a service to Charles?

How do Charles and Victor misunderstand each other in the subsequent conversation?

Is it because Charles has his mind set upon the idea that Victor and his ministers have been laying plots to make him resign his inheritance himself, that he is

finally so completely taken in by Victor when Victor insists upon his accepting the crown ?

In the succeeding scene between D'Ormea and Victor, is Victor right in supposing that D'Ormea is trying to make him reconsider his action in abdicating, by showing him that his schemes will not work, — that he will get the blame any way, and that he will not be able to return as he hopes to ?

Do you think that Victor wavers a moment when he hears the shouts for King Charles ?

Polyxena, having had her suspicions aroused as to a plot, is not so easily pacified as Charles. Do her remarks and the questions she puts to Victor show that she is on the right track ? Charles's revulsion of feeling in favor of his father is so great that he accepts D'Ormea as his minister without a word, and turns from Polyxena on account of her suspicion. Is either of them penetrating enough to see the true drift of D'Ormea's remarks ?

Is it inconsistent in Polyxena to try to dissuade Charles in the first place from resigning his heirship, and now to try to make the King take his crown again ? (See opinion expressed in Introduction, *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. I.)

In Part I., Second Year, is it made perfectly clear that D'Ormea is truly desirous of serving Charles and Polyxena ?

Is D'Ormea's sincerity proved by the fact that he sticks to his purpose of trying to protect Charles from his father, although Polyxena is unfriendly to him because she thinks him in league with Victor, and Charles is indignant at him for casting suspicion on Victor ?

Does Charles really feel so sure of his father's

integrity, or is it his own fear that Victor will not prove true, that makes him turn against even Polyxena in his anxiety to save his father's honor?

When no room is left for him to doubt any longer the intentions of Victor, and he tries to mislead Polyxena and D'Ormea as to these intentions, does he believe himself to have succeeded, or does he show by the irritation of his action that he knows they know the truth?

Does the poet succeed in this part in making us feel some sympathy for Victor, by representing him as a man whose powers are breaking down, and who feels the need in his old age of the pomp and circumstance of rule he had been used to? Or is this attitude of mind mere simulation on Victor's part, his real stand being represented in his choleric outbreak against growing democratic principles in government?

In the last part, what final ruse does Charles indulge in to show his dislike of D'Ormea because of the latter's knowledge as to his father?

At the same time that he gives D'Ormea the impression that he believes the reports about his father false, and that he (D'Ormea) will not be able to prove his charges, he yet authorizes the arrest, because he knows the charges against his father are true. By this he accomplishes first the satisfaction of not acknowledging to D'Ormea his indebtedness, second the satisfaction of having his father completely in his power to punish, and then giving him what he asks for.

Is not this a very strong dramatic situation, but does it not show weakness on Charles's part?

Should he not have preferred the good of his people above the mere preserving of a filial attitude? What does Polyxena think?

Is loyalty to an unworthy object which to be maintained leads to injustice to others a virtue?

Which character is the most sincere and straightforward all through? Which is the least sincere and works only for his own ends? Which, because of an ideal, has his nature warped toward insincerity? And which triumphs over conditions and becomes sincere?

Are the characters of Charles and Victor developed from the hints in history as to their characters?

Are Polyxena and D'Ormea more dependent upon the poet's imagination?

Mr. Symons says of Polyxena: "From first to last she sees through Charles, Victor, and D'Ormea, who neither understand one another nor perhaps themselves; from first to last she is the same clear-headed, decisive, consistent woman, loyal always to love, but always yet more loyal toward truth." Does this exaggerate somewhat her powers of penetration? Did she not suspect D'Ormea of plotting against Charles to the last? and was it not sometime before she saw through Victor, and did she know that Charles all through was acting a part in his insistence upon Victor's integrity?

Of Charles Mr. Symons speaks as having "good intentions and vacillating will." Should you not say, rather, that his will to honor his father was so strong that it overcame every other consideration? (Note what Polyxena says, "King Charles," Part II., lines 335-344.)

Of Victor he says he "is an impressive study of 'the old age of crafty men' — the futile wiliness of decrepit and persevering craft, — though we are scarcely made to feel the once potent personality of the man, or to understand the influence which his

mere word or presence still has upon his son." Do you agree with this, or do you think the influence is understandable upon the ground that Charles was immensely flattered by his father's confidence in his power to straighten out the affairs of the kingdom, and was always overwhelmed by the slightest marks of affection?

Of D'Ormea he says: "D'Ormea, who checkmates all the schemes of his old master, is a most curious and subtle study of one who 'serves God at the devil's bidding,' as he himself confesses in the cynical frankness of his continual ironical self-criticism. After twenty years of unsuccessful intrigue, he has learned by experience that honesty is the best policy. But at every step his evil reputation clogs and impedes his honest action, and the very men whom he is now most sincere in helping are the most mistrustful of his sincerity." Does this do full justice to D'Ormea? Does he act sincerely because he finds "honesty the best policy," or because he really desires to be of some use in the world?

Artistically speaking, is there anything especially noteworthy in this drama beyond smooth diction and an occasional poetic flight?

Are the allusions mostly of a historical nature, lending color and life to the situations?

## SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES"

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I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Dawn of Druse Deliverance: Shall it come through the Hakeem or Loys? (Act I. For synthetic views of this and following acts, see the digests *Camberwell Browning*, also Introduction, pp. vii–xx, and for allusions to Druse history and doctrine, Notes, as cited above.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is the unfolding of the dramatic situation, in Act I., accomplished skilfully? Is it clear, but lifelike, and its exposition so distributed among the actors that the spectators need have no sense of an elaborate explanation being made?

In his paper on "The Return of the Druses," Mr. Gamaliel Bradford, Jr., says: "Nearly the whole of the first act is occupied in making clear the situation, though with a good deal of bustle and vivacity. Various subordinate Druses are introduced, anxious to begin their rebellion by pillage. They are checked by Khalil, who thus has an opportunity to repeat to them and the audience what has been done for them and is to be done by Djabal, the prophet, the Messiah, the reincarnation of Hakeem, who is to be their leader.

Note that the same device is employed by Shakespeare, who makes Prospero in wrath chide the mutinous Ariel by recalling to him details necessary to explain the play. It is one of the many expedients invented by dramatists to avoid the dreary necessity of telling the audience what it ought to know, better at any rate than the bald prologues of Euripides or the eternal *two-gentlemen-meeting* of the lazy Fletcher." ("Boston Browning Society Papers," p. 272.)

The office of the first act in the construction of a drama is, however, not merely to exhibit the preceding causes of the action, the antecedents and relation of the hero to the movement he is preparing; but, also, to give a glimpse of some counter-play against him which is held back from manifesting itself decidedly, until the second act. Is Browning neglectful of this important element of preparation for a struggle? How does he present it?

"What the drama presents," let Freytag remind us, since his work is generally accepted as an exposition of the general rules of dramatic construction established by the usage of great writers — "is always a struggle, which, with strong perturbations of soul, the hero wages against opposing forces. And as the hero must be endowed with a strong life, with a certain one-sidedness, and be in embarrassment, the opposing power must be made visible in a human representative." Who is this representative in Browning's first act who gives us in his person a glimpse of some threatening counter-play against the hero's plot of action? Is it well to learn his importance so gradually and blindly as one does in this act? How long is it after he is mentioned before his possible future importance in the impending revolt against the Prefect's rule looms up?



Does Browning succeed very well in making it seem natural and reasonable in Loys not to tell at once why he has returned to the island?

On this point Mr. Bradford comments that Loys "refrains from discovering" his appointment and his "hopes of benefiting his Druse friends," and that it is an important element in the action that he should so refrain, but he adds: "I am not sure that it is wholly consistent with the open boyish character of Loys, who would be more likely to proclaim it at once and toss his cap in the air."

This objection seems to be well founded on the character of Loys; but is there not a good reason or two insinuated dexterously by the poet for his silence here? If his friendship for Djabal is not enough to keep him quiet till he has told him first, how about his love for Anael, and its effect also upon the perplexed mood in which he stands at the close of Act I.?

What does Act I. reveal of the character of Loys?

Is Act I. vivid as an opening spectacle? Would it be effective on the stage?

Are all the main characters introduced by mention in this act, and how tell-tale is the mention?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Hakeem and his Bride Falter. Loys's Weight in the Scale. (Act II.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is the motive of this drama the Incarnation, as suggested in the Introduction to the *Camberwell Browning* (Vol. III., p. viii)?

Will any other motive elucidate the structure of the play as well?

Is this motive too abstract to be the shaping influence of a dramatic action? Or in a drama, as in other

works of art, is the question, properly, not *what* material is used, but *how* it is used? — Is it, in this play, so closely adapted to suit the unfolding of a stirring and eventful plot, and so blent with human impulses and desires and aims that it loses its abstract theological aspect and becomes a living factor in action?

If it is historically true that such a doctrine has vitally affected the character of a race and the events occurring to it, either by belief or scepticism, is it, therefore, profoundly suited to receive dramatic treatment? Why not?

In this case, what connection has faith in the Druse doctrine of the Incarnation with the deliverance of the Druse nation?

What connection has the human love of Djabal and Anael for each other with doubt of it?

Is the influence of Loys upon Anael and Djabal natural? What element of conflict with their notion of the Incarnation does the Frank Knight-Hospitaller bring into the plot?

How are the relations of Djabal, Anael, and Loys to one another and to the lever which is to raise the Druse revolt — the Incarnation — brought into play and counterplay in Act II., so as to make the action seem doubtful, as it should seem, at this stage of the movement, while yet these very elements of doubt and love are the means of initiating the action about to follow?

What part has Khalil to play? Is it an unimportant part? Is he disconnected with the Incarnation motive? Is any one of the characters disconnected with it?

Is the mutual hesitation of Djabal and his bride

a means of delaying or precipitating the climax of the following act? Is it skilfully managed? Or are the two long asides which take place during their interview awkward? If what these asides accomplish is essentially necessary for the action, are they therefore good? Could the same effect have been accomplished without any stage awkwardness, by some other expedient?

The reason for asides on the stage seems to be the need to give conflicting inner points of view to the audience without making them known to the actors. What has been the usage in regard to them? Is there a tendency in the most modern playwriting to reform such usage in accord with a more realistic art, which in this act would have modified Browning's asides to advantage?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Hakeem Forced to Act. The Prefect Goes to his Doom. Loys is Disillusionized. (Act. III.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* Wherein does the climax of the action consist as brought out in this act?

A series of conflicting effects are wrought out successively through the relations of Anael and Loys, of Djabal and Anael, of Loys and the Prefect, and finally, through the relations of the Prefect to the impending deed which is to start the insurrection. Are these effects so manifold that too varied an excitement results? Or are all these strands of the action interwoven so as to deepen continuously the suspense and intensity?

Is it a mistake or a merit in the construction of this act that its outcome is not put into effect till the first scene of the next act, and that this outcome — the

Prefect's assassination, which is to be the signal for the Druse revolt — seems to be imminent at the hands of Djabal, although he has been struggling against it?

Why are we left in the dark about what the crucial test of faith and love is which Anael is contemplating? Does this add an unnecessary element of agitation and suspense to the plot? Or since Djabal's unsettlement of all his plans is due to Anael, and Loys's perplexities are also due to Anael, is it especially appropriate that she shall become the unsuspected rallying-point of the action here, instead of Djabal, who only seems to be, while she really is, that rallying-point?

It is at this stage in the development of a drama that the dramatist disposes his material according to whether he means his hero to push his way on, struggling actively for the mastery until the catastrophe is reached, as Macbeth does, for example, or whether he shall henceforth be dominated, as Othello is, by some counter-force. Djabal has hitherto actively directed his future, and until now has felt free and able to consult his own will. In this act he finds his own past course in the way of his new desires and plans. It compels him to proceed as he had originally intended before he had questioned the honesty of his course. The counter-force should loom up here. Does it?

Is this counter-force, which is destined to direct the course of events in the remainder of the play, obscure because it comes from an unexpected quarter, — because the public is in the habit of looking to rivals of the hero in love, like Loys, or competitors for power, like the Nuncio, for such a counter-force, instead of to a woman who loves the hero? Or is it obscure because intentionally it has not been indicated

clearly, since at this stage of the game it would be impolitic to do so?

Is it desirable or not that the audience should get a clew or two to the coming action, but not be able to guess certainly what is in store for it?

How has Browning manipulated his material here with reference to the oncoming action? Why is Anael given the key to the situation by having the ring intrusted to her which will throw open the palace doors to the people? Is this accidental, or significant, and in agreement with the structure of the play?

Does Browning leave too much room for the actress to make the part of Anael portentous and full of meaning, so as to excite without enlightening the audience? Is his art at fault in depending so much on the actors' ability to follow and interpret the trend of the play sympathetically?

Is this act, in particular, one that would gain in clarity by being put on the stage instead of being read?

Loys is virtually liberated from fulfilling his vows to knighthood by the Prefect's revelation to him of the secret iniquities of the order. Freed from his perplexities, he is able now to indulge his love for Anael, to take his place as Prefect, and to make all known to Djabal. Does this promise to be of direct importance in the action, or is it too late? Moreover, is the audience so assured by this time of Anael's love for Djabal, that it must be aware that Loys can only affect the plot externally?

Is it fitting that Loys's power to check Djabal shall depend at this point on Anael, and that the audience must centre on her future course what curiosity and interest it has in the young Frank's success in love?

IV. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*

— Anael Proves her Doubt. The Hakeem Confesses the Truth, but Holds to his Mission. The Nuncio Arrives. (Act. IV.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — The heroine of the play becomes the hero in the opening scene of Act IV. That is, the active rôle which Djabal has assumed is suddenly taken up by that person who during the latter part of the climax act (Act III.) has been steadily budding into prominence as the leader of the coming counter-action, from the moment that Djabal has to give up the initiating of events, and is forced to succumb to his own past.

Is this scene not only original and thrilling, but wholly in accord with the artistic design and structure of the drama and with the character-interest? Mr. Arthur Symons, in writing of this scene (“Introduction to Browning,” p. 60), which he considers magnificent and the finest in the play, calls attention to the “singularly impressive touch of poetry and stage-craft in a certain line of it, where Djabal and Anael meet, at the moment when she has done the deed which he is waiting to do. Unconscious of what she has done, he tells her to go :

‘ I slay him here,  
And here you ruin all. Why speak you not ?  
Anael, the Prefect comes ! [ANAEI screams.] ’

This mere stage-direction is a really great dramatic stroke. With this involuntary scream (and the shudder and start aside one imagines, to see if the dead man really is coming) a great actress might thrill an audience.”

Is this play, as a whole, rich or poor in such dramatic opportunities ?

Commenting on Djabal's speech as he goes to kill the Prefect, and the surprise when, dashing the curtains aside, he discovers Anael, Mr. Bradford, in the paper already cited, asks: "Could any nerves forbear to thrill at that?" Although he accounts this, and the many other kindred effects in this drama as picturesque and dexterous, he questions whether it is deeply enough rooted in human nature to be worthy of Browning. "And afterwards? How does it help us the least in the world to get at Djabal's character, which is all that interests now?"

But is this not precisely the scene which is based profoundly upon Anael's nature? In it has she not put to a supreme test her love and the doubts which contended within her for the victory over her faith in the Hakeem? And is it not precisely this deed of hers which constitutes a searching test of Djabal's recently awakened desires to play an honest part, — not the god's, but a man's? And does it not directly help us to get at Djabal's character, not merely for its own sake, since that is not quite "all that interests now," but for the sake of learning what effect his character, in the light of this deed, will now have upon his future course and upon the impending Druse revolution?

What does Anael's act bring about? Is it natural and effective that it should make Djabal confess the whole truth to her? Is it equally natural that this confession should awaken the revulsion it does in Anael, and then should push her to urge that Djabal shall confess himself as fully to the public?

What light does his refusal to do this throw upon his character? Does it not present it as still balancing between his fundamental mysticism, and the necessi-



ties of his life's mission, on the one side, and his newly aroused fealty to truth and love, and the criticism of Oriental methods which Western ideas of life have started in his mind, on the other side?

Is it true to life, in general, that a hero physically brave and habitually adroit in manipulating public affairs, should prefer to *seem* more than he *is*, — to lack moral courage to be as honest in public as he is willing to be in private, — at least, until after he has gained his point, and accomplished a public service?

Is it exclusively an Oriental trait to justify deception of the public on the plea that it is for the public good? Is the European, in fact, as Djabal intimates (lines 125-130), apt to be more hypocritical, because more aware of the equivocalness of his public policy, than the Oriental? Do recent American and European politics supply such instances?

Would it have been wise in Djabal to have deceived Anael herself here, when she makes her second appeal (lines 86-94)?

If he could have done it, would it have been a proof of the depth of his love for her, or of its shallowness?

Is it a tribute to Anael's character that he could never bear to deceive her and could not do so now?

Is it a proof of his masculine stupidity, however, that while he thinks so highly of her character and has had such a proof of her moral courage, and heard, moreover, how ready she is to dare to follow truth at any cost, he thoroughly underrates her moral nerve and intellectual capacity to direct the action herself or to obstruct in any way the course he has now determined upon?

Does Browning account convincingly for Djabal's

character being of such mixed mettle, part typically Oriental, part sceptical?

Is Browning wrong in depicting so exalted a nature as Anael's in an Oriental woman?

"In Anael, as in Djabal, though in a less degree," says Mr. Bradford, "there is a very strong mixture of the nineteenth century; and if you wish to feel this fully, I should advise reading Pierre Loti's 'Roman d'un Spahi,' where you will find the character of an Oriental woman portrayed in a very different fashion."

But is it not a manifestly superficial proceeding to class all Orientals together without discrimination? Does Browning write from a deeper knowledge of different qualities and degrees of development in the Oriental than Loti does? Does Loti view all women with bias?

What warrant is there for exhibiting an initiated Druse of the Sheik's family as an instructed and heterodox type of the Oriental, so much so, indeed, that he furnishes one of the nearest mediæval progenitors of that species of nineteenth-century agnostic whose scepticism has led him so far as to believe firmly in the Unknowable? What warrant, moreover, is there for depicting an initiate Druse maiden of the purest blood and an unusually secluded household, as distinguished for intellectual acuteness and emotional energy, far above the usual slavish inmate of an Oriental harem? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. III., Notes 20, p. 303, and 116, p. 304, for information on the philosophy distinctive of the Druse Ockal, and for the learning which the initiate Druse woman of rank was free to attain.)

Does Loys put the hero in the shade? Is he too

“fresh,” or the soul of truth? Is he as disinterested in his attachment to the Druses as he thinks he is? Is he depicted as Djabal’s moral superior in depth of virtue? Or is he merely his superior in intention, and as to desires as yet untempted and untried? Does Loys appear to advantage or disadvantage beside him in the dialogue between them after the guard has disclosed the Prefect’s death and the Druse revolt?

Why is Act IV. so continuously eventful and full of surprise? Is it too much so for a properly constructed fourth act? Or is the way it proceeds the legitimate result of Browning’s design? This, on analysis, seems to be to have the plot follow Djabal’s lead up to the climax, Act III., and then to follow the counter-movement, centred in Anael and disputing the sway of the original movement, up to the catastrophe, Act V.

Is this a confusion of the plot of event, or a totally original way of combining the qualities of the old drama of action and outcome with the new drama of will and initiation of action?

V. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Nuncio and Loys Indulge their Last Hopes. Anael Betrays but Saves the Hakeem and the Druses. (Act V.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — After an act so spirited as Act IV. is, there ought to be a mass of effects in the final act to round out the plot perfectly. How does it meet this dramatic necessity, — as to crowd and spectacular background, as to spirited dialogue, and as to unexpected turns of event?

Is there humor in this act?

Has it an element of pathos?

Is the play, as a whole, a remarkable blend of rich spectacle and thrilling plot, joined with character-development and symbolism? And does the structure of the piece betoken this, by carrying on the plot in two currents directly conducing toward the catastrophe, one movement steadily falling towards the final events of a successful revolution, and a second steadily thwarting the other, in order to educe a higher spiritual denouement? Does this explain why the tragical deaths of hero and heroine are none the less triumphant, and the deliverance of the Druses after all accomplished?

What is the bearing of the Nuncio's part in the action? For his character, see programme on "The Prelate."

Is Christianity represented well by comparison with the Druse religion in this play in the persons of Loys, the Prefect, and the Nuncio?

Is the coming of the Venetian admiral anything more than ornamental?

Does the final act bring Khalil, Loys, Djabal, and Anael all to the climax of their spiritual possibilities in character? How is this accomplished in each case, consistently with their foregoing parts? "Though Loys, Khalil, and Anael have some life and reality," says Professor Walker ("The Greater Victorian Poets," p. 189), "it is hardly sufficient to give the play its proper balance." Is this observation hard on Browning, or on Professor Walker's comprehension of Browning's design?

Should Anael be condemned as disloyal to her own people and to her lover? Is she loyal to them in a deeper and truer sense?

Does she play the part of the Hamza, symbolizing

in the drama the Universal Intelligence, who completes the revelation of the Hakeem to man, as suggested in the *Camberwell Browning* (Vol. III., Introduction, p. xii) ?

What growth in grace and honesty of character, making himself wellnigh what he seemed to be and was not before, does Djabal owe to her ? Was her last test of his love for her and his regard for the truth more successful than her earlier ones ? Compare with her scene with Djabal in Act IV.

Why does she salute Djabal as "Hakeem" ? Is she deceived ? Does she wish to delude others, to save Djabal at the expense of her own veracity ? Is the essential nature of love revealed to her in that poignant moment, and does she express her sense of the half-divine, half-human quality of love in her last cry, completing so her revelation of the symbolic truth of the Incarnation ? (See, on this query, *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. III., Introduction, pp. xii, xiii, xvi, xvii, xix, and xx.)

Does Djabal also come to understand that a deeper truth belongs to his rôle of Hakeem than he suspected ? In what different and characteristic ways do the others take it ? (See Introduction, before cited, for remarks on this and other of these queries.)

Are the diction and imagery of the play suited to its Oriental environment ?

## SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.'"

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*Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* —  
The Situation: Its Effect upon the Characters and its  
Artistic Presentation.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — (For account of the situation, see notes to *Camberwell Browning* as given above.) How much of the situation comes out in the first scene with the retainers, and how is a note of foreboding and trouble struck in the midst of the curiosity and delight of the retainers?

Has the poet succeeded in characterizing the different retainers vividly with a few dexterous touches, and so made this first scene both lively and natural?

In the second scene we are introduced to all the remaining characters except Mildred. Should you describe Thorold, as he appears in this scene, to be a man very proud of his ancient and irreproachable line? Mertoun, to be a young man caring more for individual worth than for family grandeur? Guendolen to be a woman of wit and wisdom, with a much better head than Austin; and Austin to be a man of warm affections, blundering honesty, but very little penetration, and in all intellectual things following the lead of Guendolen?

Do the hesitation at times in Mertoun's manner and the criticisms of Guendolen echoed by Austin also strike a note of trouble to come? But is there any hint of what that trouble is to be?

In the opening of the third scene, where Guendolen and Mildred talk, is it very evident that something is wrong, but do you get any idea of what it is until Mertoun enters her window? What has Guendolen said in this conversation to throw still further light on the ideals of Thorold?

In the scene between Mildred and Mertoun what revelation is made of their respective characters? Does he show that he feels such supreme love as theirs makes any sin they may have been guilty of dwindle into insignificance? Is he justified in so feeling, and does it show the depth and sincerity of his love?

With Mildred, the notions of right and wrong are more fixed. She has sinned against her cherished ideal, and cannot see any way in which the sin can be wiped out except through punishment. Holding the ideal she did, could she have felt any other way? Does she, however, show, by the end of the scene, that had the situation developed differently she might again have been happy? Does the language in this scene express intense emotional fervor?

In Act II., when the worst of all blows falls upon Thorold, does he show his innate fineness of character in his manner of taking it, and also, from what hints we can gain, in the way he declares he will act? In his interview with Mildred what changes his intention and makes him lose entire control of himself? Was he justified in so quickly jumping to the most evil construction of Mildred's actions? In any case, should



he not have investigated further before he decided upon action ?

Has Browning made of Guendolen in this scene a type of woman's noblest friendship and intuition ?

Was Mildred too much overwhelmed with the sense of her own guilt to make any defence, or was she chiefly anxious to shield her lover ? Was it any wonder that the tortured girl could not see any way out of the dilemma and so put herself in a position to be horribly misjudged ? If she had told the whole truth to Thorold, do you think the tragedy would have been prevented ?

How is the one other chance to prevent the tragedy lost ?

Do you get the impression, in the opening of the third act, that Thorold had been struggling with his passion of rage, but is irresistibly drawn by it to the spot where he may meet the man who has done him such wrong ? When he finds out that Mildred's lover is Mertoun, does he act entirely consistently with what he had told Mildred in the first place in the morning, namely, that she might marry her lover, and he would do all to shield her, etc. ? The revulsion of feeling when he discovered that the lover and Mertoun were one and the same, instead of minimizing the sin as Guendolen felt, seemed in his eyes to maximize it ; was this because of the deception that had been practised upon him, or because of the sin itself ?

Does Mertoun explain satisfactorily in his dying speech how it was he did not take the straightforward path in the first place ? Is it not perfectly natural that a young and modest youth should have an awe of the distinguished head of a great family, and be afraid

to press his suit for fear he might lose? Is it he who is to blame so much as a condition of society where one man rules all the doings of his family?

Do Mertoun and Mildred both see at the end that a higher law than man's law would exonerate them, and that Thorold had sinned more in taking into his own hands their punishment than they had sinned in their love?

Could argument or reason have convinced Thorold of this, or only the awakening which came through the death he himself dealt Mertoun?

Does the peculiar pathos of this play grow out of the fact that three pure, good, and innocent people become strangled in the meshes of conventional ideals which regard such love as that of Mildred and Mertoun a sin, no matter what the conditions, and which consider that no subsequent action can expiate such a sin?

If they had all known what they realized at the last, would the tragedy have happened?

While the situation in this play could be outlined in a few words, its power consists in its moving presentation of the emotions of the various actors in the drama from Gerard up to Thorold: in Gerard do we see love in conflict with loyalty; in Mildred, love in conflict with a preconceived ideal, bringing the emotions of fear, grief, humiliation, and finally triumph and forgiveness, in its train; in Thorold, love in conflict with the honor of his family; in Mertoun, love in conflict with awe of a great personage; and finally, in Guendolen, love large and whole?

Is the language everywhere suited to the intensity of the emotion?

The moral and artistic aspects of this play have

called forth a number of diverse opinions. Mr. Arthur Symonds says: "The whole action is passionately pathetic, and it is infused with a twofold tragedy, — the tragedy of the sin and that of the misunderstanding, — the last and final tragedy which hangs on a word, a word spoken when only too late to save three lives. This irony of circumstance is at once the source of earth's saddest discords, and the motive of art's truest tragedies. It takes the place, in our modern world, of that Necessity, the irresistible Fate of the Greeks; and is not less impressive because it arises from the impulse and unreasoning wilfulness of man rather than from the implacable insistency of God. It is with perfect justice, both moral and artistic, that the fatal crisis, though mediately the result of accident, of error, is shown to be the consequence and the punishment of wrong. A tragedy resulting from the mistakes of the wholly innocent would jar on our sense of right, and could never produce a legitimate work of art. . . . In this play, each of the characters calls down upon his own head the suffering which at first seems to be a mere caprice and confusion of chance."

Looked at in this way, do not the suffering and the punishment seem entirely out of proportion to the sins committed?

Does not the tragedy of this play rather consist in the fact that the punishment *is* disproportionate to the sin, and yet that, given the characters and their ideals, it could not be averted, because to none of them had come the larger view of human life which recognizes that sin against conventional standards may grow out of exaltation of character instead of from degeneration of character?

Professor Walker remarks: "The great fault of 'A Blot in the 'Scutcheon' is that in it the moral situation overtops the characters, whereas the true dramatic method is to express the moral only in and through the characters. . . . Mildred's character is almost summed up in the moral situation in which she is placed; there is no opportunity to know her otherwise."

If this were true, the denouement would seem to be the only one possible, while what we actually feel is that the denouement might have been different with different characters; therefore the characters dominate the situation, not the situation the characters?

Suppose it be admitted that "Mildred's character is summed up in the situation," is that necessarily a fault? Would a young woman in such a coil of sorrow and shame be likely to show much of her character that was not related to the problem? Could such a problem help being dominant?

Mr. Sharp's criticism is that the play "has the radical fault characteristic of writers of sensational fiction, a too promiscuous 'clearing the ground' by syncope and suicide." Given the passion of Thorold, who murdered Mertoun, which is a frequent enough sort of passion to be perfectly natural, — even to-day, — do not the other two deaths follow naturally, Mildred's from a broken heart (not an unknown occurrence) and Thorold's by his own hand?

Mr. Symons, though perhaps mistaking the motive of the play, has a thorough appreciation of its beauty. He says: "The language has a rich simplicity of the highest dramatic value, quick with passion, pregnant with thought, and masterly in imagination; the plot and characters are perhaps more interesting and affect-

ing than in any of the other plays; while the effect of the whole is impressive from its unity."

Other criticisms appreciative of the play are Mr. Skelton's, who calls it "one of the most perfectly conceived and perfectly executed tragedies in the language;" and Charles Dickens declared he knew no love like that of Mildred and Mertoun, no passion like it, no moulding of a splendid thing after its conception like it, and that he would rather have written this play than any other play of modern times. (For another appreciative opinion, see Introduction to Vol. III., *Camberwell Browning*.)

Do the criticisms against the play here given show not only a cut and dried definition of what a drama ought to be, but also a misunderstanding of the motive of the drama, which they interpret as being the old one of sin and its retribution, instead of the new one of sin and its relativity?

Professor Lounsbury, in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* for December, 1899, under the caption "A Philistine View," declares that there is a "lack of adequate motive for the existence of the situation in which the lovers are represented as being at the time the play opens. And this is followed by a succession of acts, each one of which seems to vie with the one preceding in folly, if not surpass it. . . . It is simply impossible to conceive rational beings in real life conducting themselves with so thorough a disregard of ordinary sense." If it were admitted that the characters do not act like nineteenth-century college graduates, could not their actions be defended as natural to the England of the Georgian Era, when the head of a great family was indeed awe-inspiring, old-style romance dominant, and girls were not instructed in

all knowledge, as they are now? and also on the ground that highly strung, sensitive people may at any time act irrationally under stress of great emotion? Would there be any tragedy or sorrow or regret in life if human beings acted only rationally?

One of his points is that the clever Guendolen gives up all effort when she finds Thorold has gone off (see act ii., lines 434-443). On the contrary, does she not distinctly say that she and Austin will go and seek for Thorold? And in the next act is not the impression distinctly given that they had been looking for him all day? (For further remarks on this article, see *Poet-lore*, January, 1900.)

## SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY"

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I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Forces of Selfishness and Unselfishness at Work around the Unconscious Colombe. (Act I.)

*Questions for Investigation and Discussion.* — How much of the situation, past and present, comes out in the talk of the courtiers?

Is it true regard for Colombe that causes all the courtiers to shirk the responsibility of carrying the announcement to her of the change in her affairs, or does it grow out of their consciousness of their disloyalty in not rallying round her whom they had so recently crowned with acclamation? Was their meek acceptance of the Duke due to any moral recognition of his right, or merely to the selfish desire to provide for themselves under any circumstances? Is there anything to choose between these courtiers?

How is it at once made evident that Valence is a man of a different stamp?

Does this act serve clearly to outline the influences which are to affect Colombe's life?

Is there any hint at all that Valence is in love with her?



II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Colombe Awakes to the Realities of Life, Learns a Truer Source of her Right to Rule, and supported by Valence Decides to Defy Berthold. (Act II.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Does Colombe's reasoning about the reports she has heard of her cousin's intentions, and her easy allayment of fears, growing out of the lapse of attention to herself, show how innocent she is of the ways of the world?

Is the fineness of her nature shown by her immediate response to Valence when he pleads the cause of Cleves, and also by her immediate relinquishment of the crown, or does the latter show that she has taken too personal a view of her position, and has laid greater stress upon personal devotion to herself than upon the duties her position imposed upon her?

How does Valence bring her to a realization of her duties? Is he justified in basing her right to rule upon the need of Cleves to have just such a heart as hers to sympathize with its wrongs, instead of upon the suffrage of Pope or King, etc.?

Although the courtiers are impressed with the actions of both Valence and Colombe, especially Guibert, how do they show themselves true to their instincts the moment Berthold is announced?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Effect of Colombe's Defiance upon Berthold and of Valence upon Colombe. (Act III.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Does it appear, from the remarks of Melchior and Berthold and the latter's action upon Colombe's defiance, that Berthold is a man who enjoys a little opposition?

Are we to suppose that his past love episode and

his disappointment really seared his heart, or that ambition had always been his strongest motive ?

When Colombe comes actually into his presence, she wavers and is on the point of admitting his claim. What decides her to make a stand against him, the thought of the wrongs of Cleves or the thought of her own degradation from power ?

Does she show herself to have developed much in this scene ?

Does Valence in making her defiance for her also forget the wrongs of Cleves ?

The courtiers do not seem to be deceived as to the inner motive of his allegiance to Colombe. Is it because they cannot imagine such a stand as that taken by Valence to be based upon anything but self-interest in some form or other, or because the fervor of his manner belied him ?

Could Berthold afford to be deferential, knowing he had all the power on his side ?

Was some sense of justice in his heart touched, or did he scent afar a danger in the fascination of Colombe's personality, since it could raise up for her such a valiant defender as Valence ?

How much does Colombe mean when she says to Valence, " You spoke and I am saved " ? Does she refer simply to her position as Duchess, or has Valence in his speech awakened her to her true duties again ?

From the actions of Valence so far, can it be predicted that he will give an unbiassed judgment on the question of the respective rights of Colombe and Berthold, even if it should tell against his own chances ?

IV. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— Colombe, given the Choice between Love and the World, Hesitates. (Act IV.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Do the courtiers again show their absolute selfishness and their lack of comprehension of anything but base motives in the opening scene of this act?

Is Valence hypocritical in regard to himself when he discovers he has been working for his own benefit more than for that of Cleves? Do you not feel certain that under any circumstances he would have taken up the cause of Cleves? Because great personal happiness is opening before him, need he necessarily neglect his people? If it came to a point where he must choose between his love for Colombe and his championship of the people, which ought to be his choice?

What far worse complication is introduced into the problem by Berthold's offer of his hand to Colombe?

Is Berthold's misunderstanding of Valence's manner of taking this announcement natural to a man in his exalted position? Is his obtuseness further illustrated by his offering a post to Valence?

In the subsequent scene between Valence and Colombe, does she know all the time that it is herself Valence loves, and talks as she does in order to encourage him to make a declaration? or is she uncertain whether he loves her or not, and is anxious to reassure herself? or is she surprised when she finds it is herself? Is she flattered by the offer of Berthold? Why does she leave Valence in doubt as to her intentions? — because she is not certain which way she will decide, or because she wants to see for herself whether Valence has correctly reported the attitude of Berthold, or because she wants to do Valence the honor of accepting him in the presence of Berthold?

Does Valence plead the cause of Berthold as disin-

terestedly as he might? Is this because of a selfish desire to have her himself, or because he is burning to have her live up to the highest ideal and remain faithful to herself and to the love he believes she has already shown him?

Is he right in thinking she has shown him her love? If he had loved her and did not know whether she loved him or not, would it have been more honorable in him not to make such a point of the Duke's lack of love? But knowing it, as he thinks, must he in justice to the sanctity of love let her know that she would be exchanging love for position merely?

Does Colombe have a momentary disillusionment when she declares that "nothing's what it calls itself," — feeling that selfishness, after all, underlies devotion, zeal, faith, loyalty, — or is she indulging in a little playful thrust at something which she really considers supreme?

Has not her own love been roused because of the service to herself rather than because Valence took the part of the suffering people?

Is it quite kind in her to compare Valence, after the earnest and passionate appeal he has just made to her, to a hawk in the valley? Does this last speech of hers leave one in doubt as to whether she could not be won by Berthold if he were to use the right tactics?

Miss Vida D. Scudder's view upon Colombe's feeling in regard to Valence's love is of interest here: "Of instinctive truth to the broader law, there is an exquisite instance in that idyllic drama 'Colombe's Birthday.' The young Duchess, deserted by her friends, finds, in her dark moment of despair of human truth, her only help in the loyalty of one young advocate.

This Valence finally declares that love for her has actuated his service. She loves him in return, yet the first knowledge of his love stirs in her no joy; it touches her with keenest pain. . . . Thus personal joy in the offered love is merged for her in sorrow, that she has lost the broader, finer service." ("Womanhood in Modern Poetry," *Poet-love*, Vol. I., p. 449, October, 1889.)

V. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— The Triumph of Love in Colombe and Valence.  
(Act V.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — From Berthold's confidences to Melchior, would it appear that his scheme to marry Colombe was not so disinterested as he would have it appear? Or is he simply trying to baffle Melchior's conclusions as to his character?

In her interview with Berthold does it appear that Colombe is only interested in testing him as a man, and that the fact that she might be Empress weighs as nothing in the scale? If he had appealed to her as a man, would it have proved her fickle to have accepted him, or merely that her love for Valence had only been incipient, and that her nature responded to the best she had yet encountered, but would respond more completely if a still higher nature were to meet hers?

In any case, is not the standpoint of Valence nobler, who recognizes love as the highest good, and that it is based on a spiritual kinship quite separable from questions of service and disinterestedness, upon which Colombe seems inclined to think it based? Do you not feel sure that he would have continued to love Colombe even if she had proved false to love?

In declaring that his desire would be only to evolve

the love of one he loved even if it were for another, and in asking for the redress of the wrongs of Cleves, does Valence reach a point of unselfish devotion which should prove to Colombe that if service grows out of love and desires the reward of love, love, on the other hand, is capable of the most exalted sacrifice of self?

Does she finally learn the true value of love?

Does Berthold, also, rise to the highest possible to such a nature as his, when he waives the low-bred implications and selfish propositions of the courtiers and declares that her possible feeling for Valence is of no moment to him, who makes her a proposition for her to accept or not as she will, and should she decide for him would trust his honor with her implicitly?

To sum up these three characters, might it be said that Valence is a man of the highest ideals, who never wavers in the practical applications of them, and being such is the only one who criticises himself for not being absolutely disinterested in seeking Colombe, but who realizes that love is a gift that must not be dishonored? Of Colombe can it be said that she has not yet developed beyond the stage where she is more interested in having other people fulfil what she conceives as their duty to her than in recognizing her duty to them? Even to the end she assumes the position of the judge of others, though her possibilities of development are revealed in the fact that she chooses the highest when it is presented to her. She responds to high ideals, but does not seem capable of initiating them herself. Is this a popular ideal of woman's nature? Of Berthold may it be said that he is a man whose course in life is fixed, and, though capable of appreciating higher ideals than his own, is

suspicious of the possibility of such ideals existing, and incapable of following them himself?

VI. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Observations on the Art of this Drama.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is this a drama of action or a drama of situation? Is what action there is the result of the situations, or are the situations the result of the actions, or is there an interchange of both?

Does the chief interest of the drama, however, centre upon the presentation of the characters and their development in relation to the various situations they are called upon to face?

Upon this point Mr. Symons says the play "is mainly concerned with inward rather than outward action; in which the characters themselves, what they are in their own souls, what they think of themselves, and what others think of them constitute the chief interest, the interest of the characters as they influence one another or external events being, however intense, in itself distinctly secondary."

Do you find that the characters all stand out as distinct personalities aside from their various attitudes to the problems involved? What sort of references and allusions are used by them all respectively? Does the language of Melchior betray the scholar; of Valence, the man of wisdom, and the lover of the people as well as of Colombe; of Berthold, the astute observer of the signs of the times as well as the victorious Duke; of Colombe, the girl made for happiness as well as the developing woman facing the problems of life?

Does the Duke especially suit his manner to whom-ever he is talking? (For allusions, see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. III., Notes, p. 321.)



Does Melchior or Sabyne have anything to do with the play, except as foils to show certain aspects of the characters of Berthold and Colombe respectively? Does either of them influence any one's action?

What do you find to be the characteristics of the blank verse in this play, — very regular or with considerable variations in the accents and the endings of the lines, etc.?

Are some of the speeches too long to be effective on the stage? When you come to examine even the longest, do you feel that anything could be left out without seriously damaging the thought? If this is so, might it not be possible to deliver them in such a way that they would seem entirely in place? In modern conversation does not one person frequently talk at some length?

Professor Walker ("Greater Victorian Poets") says of this play that "it is a finer and subtler piece" than any of the plays preceding it. After having studied these preceding plays, would you consider this assertion, while showing an appreciation of this play, shows lack of appreciation in regard to the others? He goes on to say: "The characters are interesting. Valence is grand with his fire and eloquence and unselfishness. Berthold is a fine study of the man of the world, clear-sighted, selfish, yet capable of generosity, and with something of a heart, though he is too deeply involved in affairs to follow its dictates. In his reading of others he makes mistakes, through trusting too much to the selfish view. His confidant, Melchior, the student-observer of life, less entangled in affairs than Berthold, and less inclined to measure all with the measure that fits most, is right in the case of Valence and Colombe where Berthold

is wrong. Colombe herself is rather the centre round which the others play than a figure of great interest for her own sake. Of the courtiers, Guibert is worthy of study. In him the struggles of a disposition naturally good with the tendencies begotten of demoralizing surroundings and mean companionships are exceedingly well depicted. Contact with Valence rouses in him the better nature which would else have slept, and in the end he rises to the height of following the ruined fortunes of his mistress."

Is this a just appreciation except in the case of Colombe? Does Symons's appreciation of Colombe fit the case better? —

"Colombe, the veritable heroine of the drama, is, if not 'the completest full-length portrait of a woman that Mr. Browning has drawn,' certainly both one of the sweetest and one of the completest. Her character develops during the course of the play . . . and it leaves her a nobler and stronger, yet not less charming woman than it found her. . . . At the first and yet final trial, she is proved and found to be of noble metal. The gay girlishness of the young Duchess, her joyous and generous light heart; her womanliness, her earnestness, her clear, deep, noble nature, attract us from the first words, and leave us, after the hour we have spent in her presence, with the inalienable uplifting memory that we have of some women we meet for an hour or a moment, in the world or in books."

If this is true, is it Colombe's personality rather than her strength of character that produces the effect?

(For further opinions, see Introduction to Vol. III., *Camberwell Browning*, pp. xxi, xxv.)

## SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "LURIA"

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I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Braccio's Decision. (Act I.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — The opinions of three different persons about Luria are given before he enters upon the scene. Do they differ greatly, and what light do they throw upon the nature of his ability as a general and upon his character?

Is Braccio inconsistent in holding to the theory that self-interest is the master-impulse with mankind, when he speaks as he does to his Secretary (lines 61-70)?

On what is the Secretary's appeal based that Braccio should love himself, and therefore not condemn a guiltless man? — on the fear that he may not be able to stand having so much power himself?

Is the Secretary right in rating intellectual astuteness as far more dangerous than any brute force can be?

Why is Braccio, the champion of brain-rule, so complimentary to the brute-force embodied in Luria that he fears it? Does this fact of his fearing it insinuate that he half unconsciously suspects in Luria

the presence of a subtler force, and that, while he is belittling it, he really envies, as a rival, its possible influence over Florence?

What bearing upon the main event of this act, which is Braccio's decision against Luria, has the sketch of the Duomo with the Moorish front? Is this striking architectural idea useful here in a double way to symbolize Luria's love for Florence, and Braccio's fear of Luria for her sake? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. III., note 121, p. 330, for the evidence that Browning's dramatic fancy here hit upon an actual plan.)

Do Luria's presence and talk bear out the opinion of him derived from the others before he entered?

What significance has the second striking image of this act, the image of the tidal wave and the gulf stream subsiding inland (lines 320-330), as applied to Luria's relation to Florence?

Is Domizia the most obscurely painted and least interesting of the characters of this act? Or does she pique curiosity here, and promise development?

Is it clever or stupid in the astute Braccio to be so swayed by Luria's talk? Does he seize upon it as an excuse for the course he has inwardly resolved upon, or is it natural that he should be alarmed and convinced by any sign from Luria that he is less lacking in penetration than he has given him credit for being?

Is the outcome of the talk about Luria, the grudging praise of Puccio, the suspicious jealousy for Florence of Braccio, and the disinterested observation of him by the Secretary, well calculated to make us wary of him, or to make us see that his nature has a largeness far beyond theirs?

Does this act throw light upon the quality of his intelligence, as well as upon the generosity of his nature? What proofs of the artistic in him are given? And is the evidence such as to show that his perceptions were lively and facile merely, or that his sympathies were genial? In whom is the source of the action of this drama centred, as shown in this act?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
—Luria's Decision. (Act II.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is Luria Braccio's opposite, or Husain? Does Husain, that is, stand more for the racial and physical quality to which Braccio is opposed and against which he is working, than Luria does? Why?

The last act gave an unfriendly outside view of Domizia and of her place and aim in being near Luria (lines 172-184). How far does her own revelation of herself in this act agree with it? Is justice or vengeance her desire? Is her revenge only for the sake of her house or also to tutor Florence?

What is told of Tiburzio, both in Act I. and II., before he arrives on the scene? What is his office in the dramatic action?

Is "Luria" too severely symmetrical in its structure, having on the one side, in Act I., a movement centred in Braccio standing for Florence, and acting through Puccio against Luria; and in Act II., on the other side, a counter-movement proceeding from Husain's instinctive racial fears of the Florentines, and finding through Tiburzio, standing for Pisa, a means whereby Luria may circumvent Braccio's plot against him? Or is this equally balanced dramatic action especially appropriate for a drama of this kind, in

which the characters are few, typical, and ideal of their different kinds, and all intentionally subordinated to the revelation of a single exalted personality?

In being thus chastely fashioned — in strong contrast, for example, to “The Return of the Druses,” wherein events are not altogether so subordinated to the display of character, and wherein cross-purpose, surprise, and complex interwoven movements and public interests are brought visibly upon the stage — in being thus chastely fashioned, is “Luria” a proof, not of Browning’s predilections for a precisely balanced dramatic form, but of his capacity to work out intentionally diverse dramatic forms?

Luria is appealed to on his most sensitive side when Tiburzio supposes that he, being an alien, will be ready to take revenge on Florence. But is his pride in being as true to Florence as one born her son could be, the real reason why he refuses to read the letter?

Does he doubt Tiburzio? If not, why then does he wait and test his Florentines by actual interview before deciding? Is it because he really is, as he wishes to be, half Florentine in cast of mind, and because he hopes to find in them some need for his native intuition which will prove that he is capable of being of the deepest use to them yet, by supplying them with a quality they lack?

Is his conclusion, namely, to “clench the obligation” they relieve him from, to conquer evil by not resisting it, — or to resist it by spirit, not by force, — actually a conclusion born of a union of the intellectual and emotional qualities of human nature?

What warrant is there for the supposition that Christ’s doctrine of conquering malevolence by non-

resistance is the fruit of a blending of typically Western and Oriental philosophy?

Are the main steps in the action of the drama skillfully marked by the stage business of the letter? Braccio's decision in Act I. is exemplified in his slow tearing of the first letter, and sending this which in Act II. in the hands of Luria marks the second step in the story. How would Luria tear that paper when he bids the trumpet answer, — slowly? Does he hesitate?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — How will Florence reward Luria? (Act III.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is Luria the only one of the characters who comes out in high relief in Act III.?

How do Braccio and Puccio and Tiburzio, each in his own way, as well as Luria, show their mettle?

Braccio, says Mr. Chadwick, in his paper on "Luria" (*Poet-lore*, Vol. VI., pp. 251-264, May, 1894, or same in "Boston Browning Society Papers," pp. 249-263), is devoted to "a worthy end — the good of Florence . . . her safety, her pre-eminence. Nor does he stain his fair intentions with foul acts, if I may turn about Sir Thomas Browne. He is completely his own dupe. In arguing that Luria must abuse his power and victory he thinks that he is going on the broad sure ground, — 'the corruption of man's heart.' Even if he had felt less confident of this, he would have given Florence and not Luria the benefit of his doubt. . . . Questioning the obvious good of other men is pretty sure to find the flaw it seeks. . . . This is Braccio's sin. His is that casuist's return on the simplicity, nay, the



coherent unity of the moral sentiment, which paralyzes faith. . . . His defect, whatever Browning meant it to appear, was not excess of intellect or lack of heart, but that he had in him the mind of Rochefoucauld, and not 'the mind of Christ.' "

In Braccio, writes Professor H. M. Pancoast (" 'Luria' : Its Story and Motive," Part II., *Poetlore*, Vol. II., pp. 19-26), "we have the embodiment of the 'cool instructed intellect.' The character is not only a natural one in itself,—it has deep historic truth. It was this very pride of pure intellect, the deification of mind and of culture, that chilled whatever there may have been of generous ardor or of religious aspiration in the Florentine civilization." Mr. J. A. Symonds's words on Macchiavelli he quotes again as "singularly applicable to Browning's Braccio," in whom, also, may be traced "the spirit of an age devoid of moral sensibility, — penetration in analysis it has, but is deficient in faith, hope, enthusiasm, and stability of character. The dry light of the intellect determined their judgment of men, as well as their theories of government." Luria, by contrast, continues Professor Pancoast, "stands beside the highest and most characteristic product of this Florentine civilization, the half-civilized Luria, in the integrity of his God-given manhood."

Is the essence of the antithesis between these two in this drama, the antithesis of "heart against head, spontaneity against reflection, impulse against calculation," as Mr. Chadwick says, or is it rather the antithesis between intellect unwarmed by sympathy, and the emotional nature enlightened and guided by reason and experience? Would Husain and not Luria stand precisely in contrast to Braccio, if the

opposition were drawn merely between heart on the one side and head on the other?

Is the contrast drawn between Luria and Braccio dependent further on an antithesis between the corporate and the individual life? And does Luria's moral triumph over the principle for which Braccio stands, that the State is of more value than any one man, imply that the man is of more value than the State?

"The whole position taken by Braccio," says Professor Pancoast, "is substantially that of the school of historians of which perhaps Buckle is the first and Tolstoy the last conspicuous example, thinkers who are inclined to reduce to a minimum the value of the individual in human affairs. But to Browning, whose conception of life is not scientific but passionate, whose interest centres rather on the destiny of the single soul than on the progress of an impersonal social revolution, the inspired man is greater than institutions."

May it again be questioned whether the marrow of the antithesis drawn between the individual and the corporate life consists merely in the exaltation of the "single soul" or the "inspired man" over the social collectivity? May it be held that the instructive contrast made is rather between a Braccio's love of Florence and a Luria's love; and that Luria's is not less serviceable to her, but more so, for the very reason that it is not inconsistent with individual integrity, and that it is not furthered by the suppression or subjection or belittlement in any way of the single soul of any one of its citizens, but by his utmost possible development?

Is Domizia's view really the precise opposite of Braccio's, since she upholds the superiority of the

individual over the State, and would have Luria teach Florence ; and is her social code any less erroneous in its emphasis on the one side than Braccio's on the other ?

Why does Luria pardon her ? Because she has intended to make use of him — just as Braccio has, though with a different aim in view — as a mere pawn in her plans with reference to Florence ?

What is Luria's view, at the close of this act, of the servant's right to resent his reward from the city he loves ? Luckily, he stands visibly furnished, through Tiburzio's proposition, with unimpugnable power to smite back, so that if he decides to turn the other cheek it will not be misunderstood and taken as an evidence that he could do nothing else.

Is it significant that he who is supposed by most commentators to be representative of sheer heart, always suspends definitive action till knowledge adds authorization to his intuitive perception of what the situation is going to be ? Braccio the astute is not so cautious as to wait until Luria's sentence had arrived before transferring the command to Puccio ; but does Luria forget that he is unauthorized till then to lay his office down ?

But is this suspense of Luria's a dramatic device ; or is it more than that, — an effect useful at this point, but also based on the truth of Luria's character as shown throughout the play ?

Is it, perhaps, meant to be intimated that thoroughly wise and effective action is a product, not of the brain, but of an instructed heart ?

IV. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— Shall Luria punish Florence ? (Act IV.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Does

Puccio's character grow in the course of the play? Why? Is he first to see the value of Luria's combination of heart with brain, disinterestedness with ability?

What light does his rebuke, in this act, of the bloodless policy as senseless throw upon the situation?

What does Husain's advice to Luria contribute to this double question of the play at this juncture, — first, what Luria would best do, and, second, what is the inner meaning of his action as an exemplar for the Florentines?

Is Domizia altogether without majesty and right on her side in her demand that corporate Florence be taught the worth of man's cause?

How is it that Luria's way of teaching the same lesson goes closer to the reformation of the evil? In refraining from resenting the indignity to himself as a personal one, does he point out that what he does resent is the indignity which Florence forces upon any genuine service of her?

V. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— The Punishment. (Act V.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is the fact that the reader or an audience know that Luria has taken poison when Act V. begins, a drawback to the interest of the conclusion?

What is it that is to be watched with interest in this act? The effect on the other characters? The unfolding of the ability and disinterestedness all along felt to be native to Luria? Or is there still room for doubt as to his course?

In the series of dialogues between Luria and the different characters circling about him, what revelations are made of him, and how do they affect each of the Florentines?

Was Puccio's talk with the Secretary in the last act effective in creating a little apprehension lest Luria might turn out to be the "wise man" whom "oppression made mad," as Puccio expresses it (Act IV. line 16)? And although the taking of the poison reassures one that Luria loves Florence, does it make it sure that he will not give her other cause to mourn him?

What sort of cause for this does he really give her, first as general, in the interview with Puccio, then as Minister of Justice, in the interview with the Secretary?

If these two interviews are both conducted in the interest of Florence, first, against external foes, and, second, against more insidious internal foes of her own blood, but perhaps created by her own injustice, how are the remaining interviews made useful to her?

The first two are planned by Luria, and he summons Puccio and the Secretary to him to instruct them, as it were, in his last will for Florence. The others are not of his summoning. Yet in what sense are they the result of his initiative?

In what different ways do they testify to his life-work for Florence, and what principles of true patriotism and right relationing of the citizen to the State do they bring out?

"To Domizia," says Professor Pancoast, in the article already cited, — "and here we touch the vital purpose of the play — to Domizia it seems that he has . . . retaught to the hard dry brain of the North the value of those deep and holy feelings which had been lost in the pride of the intellect. Her answer to Luria's lament over what seems to him his neglected mission sums up the main thought of the play. She speaks of Luria — of one who has

‘brought fresh stuff  
 For us to mould, interpret and prove right, —  
 New feeling fresh from God, which, could we know  
 O’ the instant, where had been our need of it ?  
 Whose life re-teaches us what life should be,  
 What faith is, loyalty and simpleness.’

I have no doubt that in this speech we have not merely the utterance of Domizia, but the deliberate conviction of the poet himself speaking through her.”

But does the poet, by speaking not only through Domizia but through all his characters, and by letting their own natures shape their utterance, designedly convince us of a little larger truth even than this, — namely, that in such sympathetic appreciation of an opposite nature as Luria has shown for the Florentine nature without the renunciation of his own distinctive native gifts and bent, — consists the mission of each person to every other which enables not only the right development of each, but the best possible patriotism and social progress ?

Is this the inner meaning of democracy which Italy, and above all Florence, at the head of her cities, was so near to in the Renaissance period, and missed for lack of, so disastrously ?

Did Luria love Domizia ? Was love only possible between them now ? What pathos do their last words add to the story ?

Why did the poet have to poison Luria ? Could he rightly have made the play end happily ?

Is Tiburzio’s testimony to be taken as the poet’s own moral inference ? And does it mean that a man of genius and insight is of more value than the mass of men in himself ; or in making his superior value dependent on his service to mankind, as a model of a

completer life than theirs, does it mean that the development of each man's highest capability is the supreme concern for a nation ?

How does such a social moral as this apply to the present political situation ?

Is it clear how Braccio and Husain are convinced ?

Is this play one that reaches success through eliciting from its auditors a kindred temper to that of its central character, marked by a glow of sympathetic intelligence and intuition rather than by any external excitement over its events ?

Is its lack of humor against it ? Or would humor obtrude here a jarring note ?

Is its lack of any traits of wickedness or wilful perversity, ordinary carnal-mindedness, or petty human quirks of any sort, — especially is its lack of personal love-relations unusual in Browning ?

Is the absence of such human touches a mistake, or is it well calculated to enhance the extraordinary idealistic high-mindedness of the piece ; even its least lofty characters being in earnest and conscious of their bearings ?

Yet can "Luria" be called cold or statuesque while it is so irradiated with enthusiasm ?

"If not the best of Browning's dramas," wrote James Russell Lowell, in the *North American Review* for 1848, "it is certainly one of the most striking in its clearness of purpose, the energetic rapidity of its movement, the harmony of its details, the natural attraction with which they all tend toward and at last end in the consummation, and in the simplicity and concentration of its tragic element."

Browning himself said of "Luria," in writing to Elizabeth Barrett in 1846, that it was "for a purely



imaginary stage, — very simple and straightforward.” And while he was composing the play, he spoke to her of “my Braccio and Puccio (a pale discontented man) and Tiburzio (the Pisan, good true fellow, this one), and Domizia, the Lady . . . all these with their worldly wisdom and Tuscan shrewd ways; and for me the misfortune is, I sympathise just as much with these as with golden-hearted Luria.”

Later, when Miss Barrett was reading as far as the fourth act, she asked, “Is he to die *so*? Can you mean it? . . . I can scarcely resign myself to it even as an act of necessity . . . I mean to the act, as Luria’s act, whether it is final or not — the act of suicide being so unheroical. But you are a dramatic poet and right, perhaps, where, as a didactic poet, you would have been wrong, and after the first shock, I begin to see that your Luria is the man Luria, and that his ‘sun’ lights him so far and not farther than so, and to understand the natural reaction of all that generous trust and hopefulness, what naturally it would be. Also, it is satisfactory that Domizia, having put her woman’s part off to the last, should be too late with it — it will be a righteous retribution. I had fancied that her object was to isolate him, to make his military glory and national recompense ring hollowly to his ears, and so commend herself, drawing back the veil.”

To this, Browning replied that he had wished just those feelings to be in her mind about Domizia and Luria’s death. “The last act throws light back on all, I hope. Observe only, that Luria *would* stand, if I have plied him effectually with adverse influences, in such a position as to render any other end impossible without the hurt to Florence which his religion is to

avoid inflicting — passively awaiting, for instance, the sentence and punishment to come at night, would as surely inflict it as taking part with her foes. His aim is to prevent the harm she will do herself by striking him, so he moves aside from the blow.”

Again, after reading the fifth act, Elizabeth Barrett wrote of how she had been possessed by “Luria,” “moved and affected without the ordinary means and dialect of pathos,” by its “calm attitude of moral grandeur” . . . Ah! Domizia! would it hurt her to make her more a woman — a little — I wonder!” Browning acknowledged in reply that her special color as he first conceived the play had faded. “It was but a bright line, and the more distinctly deep that it was so narrow. One of my half dozen words on my scrap of paper ‘pro memoria’ was, under the ‘Act V.’ ‘*she loves*’ — to which I could not bring it, you see! Yet the play requires it still . . . I meant that she should propose to go to Pisa with him and begin a new life. . . . I will try and remember what my whole character *did* mean — it was, in two words, understood at the time by ‘panther’s beauty.’”

## SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "A SOUL'S TRAGEDY"

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I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
 —Chiappino's Character Revealed by Circumstances.  
 (For sketch of the story, see *Camberwell Browning*,  
 Notes, as given above.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — In  
 Chiappino's first conversation with Eulalia does he  
 give the impression that he is not so much a martyr  
 to the truth as he would have Eulalia think?

His comparisons between Luitolfo and himself, his  
 irritation at the favors he has received from Luitolfo  
 indicate, do they not, that his present mood is due to  
 wounded vanity rather more than to disappointment  
 at his failure to realize his high ideals?

Should you say that his principal desire had been  
 to put himself above other men and make himself con-  
 spicuous for his own self-gratification instead of with  
 the idea of bettering society?

Does it seem at all probable that a man of his  
 evidently egotistical stamp would hesitate to express  
 his love for any one upon the grounds which he  
 informs Eulalia had deterred him? Is it possible that  
 his love for her was largely a feeling of rivalry toward

his friend? On the other hand, might it be argued that his schemes for the regeneration of the State were sincere, but that constant failure to achieve any success, and finally the taking of his love away from him by the man who seemed to succeed everywhere when he failed, and who emphasized this fact by acts of friendship lightly done, — caused his patience to give out, and, so, he took a natural if not very exalted comfort in regarding himself as a martyr and railing against his best friends?

Although Chiappino means to belittle Luitolfo to Eulalia in this talk, is it not easy to see that he has been a true friend to Chiappino, and that his character is that of a man prone to see good in others, and who, though he does not think the government perfect, believes that better results will come through working quietly and tactfully for reforms than by the methods of the revolutionist such as Chiappino uses?

Does Eulalia show any signs of being affected by Chiappino's declaration of love to her, combined with his criticisms of Luitolfo, and his assertions that she does not love Luitolfo?

What may be said of Chiappino's argument that "there's no right nor reason in the world" unless love given calls out a return of love? Does Eulalia seem to give credence to this remark of his by replying that she did not know he loved her?

Chiappino's ill-humor is at its height, when Luitolfo enters and belies all the former's ill-natured criticism by announcing that he has just killed the Provost. Does Chiappino save Luitolfo and take his deed upon himself for love of Luitolfo, or because he sees a chance here to cover himself with glory?

Was Luitolfo's dazed manner due to cowardice, as

Chiappino tries to insinuate, or to the fact of the natural excitement following a deed which must in itself have been most distasteful to a man of Luitolfo's pacific disposition?

Could anything but his absent-mindedness have excused Luitolfo's letting himself be saved by Chiappino?

From Eulalia's speech as she and Chiappino stand there alone awaiting the approaching populace, would it appear that this last deed of Chiappino's had made a profound impression upon her? Does she seem to think dying with this hero preferable to living with Luitolfo?

Is Chiappino at all occupied with Eulalia at this point? or is he thinking only of himself as the hero of the occasion?

If the play ended here, and Chiappino was to be judged by this sacrifice of his life, would the verdict be that, in spite of his egotism and vanity, he was a noble fellow; or that this was a crowning piece of egotism, and that for the sake of the notoriety of dying a martyr he could willingly give up life?

Now begins the test of Chiappino's sincerity in the unexpected change given to the situation by the fact that instead of the guards seeking justice upon the murderer of the Provost it is the revolted populace which comes and which regards him as their savior. Chiappino knows what he ought to do, but gives a reason for acting otherwise. Do you think this a sincere reason, or does he evolve it in order to salve his own conscience and answer the criticism of Eulalia's eyes? Or is he now, and has he always been deceived as to his own nature?

From Luitolfo's conversation with the bystanders

in the second act, how does it appear Chiappino has been following up his first step in deceit? From Luitolfo's aside (line 205), is it made clear that Eulalia is in league with Ogniben to lead Chiappino on to reveal himself fully, and that she tells Luitolfo that Chiappino is in urgent danger, in order to find out whether Luitolfo, still faithful, will immediately come to the rescue of his friend?

Luitolfo implies (line 36) that he had received daily intelligence from some sure friend of how matters were proceeding. His friend had evidently told him that the Provost was not dead, but did he know of Chiappino's ambition toward the Provostship? If he had, would he have exclaimed, he must confront Chiappino and Eulalia before he can believe they have been keeping him away in order to carry out the scheme outlined by the bystanders? May we conclude that the friend was Eulalia, and that she has been playing a part with both men, in order to bring things to a point where it can be proved to her own and every one's else satisfaction that Chiappino is a fraud at bottom, and that Luitolfo is the honorable, truthful man?

In his arguments in defence of his actions does Chiappino still deceive himself as to his own purposes? Is he so blinded by his own egotism that he really imagines himself to be acting in a highly praiseworthy manner, and that his vision has actually become enlarged?

He throws off, first his principles, then his love, then his friend, and in each instance produces an argument in defence of his action. Can anything be said in favor of his first argument that if you cannot accomplish your ideal of a state, it is well to use the

old methods, and through them approach a little nearer the ideal? Might the good of such a course depend upon the sincerity of the person following it, or would it be altogether evil on account of its compromise with the ideal? Is there anything to be said in defence of Chiappino's argument that his conception of love has widened? Had it really widened, or did he show himself incapable of appreciating love at all in its highest and widest sense? His argument for throwing off his friend shows him at his lowest — why?

The scene following here is a sarcastic defence of Chiappino's action by Ogniben. Should men be judged by their promises rather than by their performances, as Ogniben says? Might it depend upon whether a man strove for his ideal sincerely and yet failed, or whether he repudiated his ideal entirely? Little Bindo, for example, performed much, though not all, while Chiappino performed nothing.

Is Ogniben right when he says the nature that can respond to another nature at every point is the greater of the two?

Is he truly carrying out Chiappino's principles when he advises him to give the best of himself to his love?

Is Ogniben right when he says that differences consist more in the form of expression of a truth than in its essence? This, however, does not apply to Chiappino's case, for is there not a fundamental difference between government through the consent of the governed, and government through the authority of the governor? Could they be called different expressions of the same truth?

Is there a certain amount of truth in Ogniben's



contention that progress comes in the long run through the opposition to progress as well as through those who seek to change the present system of things? Does the fact that you recognize how your antagonist is helping things on excuse you from strenuous work on your own side, as Ogniben insinuates to Chiappino? Chiappino catching at the bait, Ogniben lets him down gently by declaring that a due proportion should be observed between the amount of good seen in the antagonist and the greater amount to be recognized on one's own side. How otherwise could one have an ideal?

Is Chiappino, when he finds the emancipated slave so disgusting for adopting the methods of the oppressors, aware that he is criticising himself?

Ogniben replies by laughing in his sleeve at the democracy of men of genius, and ironically declares that since they pull down God, there is some hope of their being saved at the last day because they put themselves up instead. Does Chiappino take Ogniben in earnest about this?

During the latter part of this conversation does Chiappino begin to suspect that Ogniben is fooling him? Or is he so completely fooled that he forgets to defer to Ogniben and falls into his accustomed habit of settling ethical problems?

Is it natural that when he discovers himself completely unmasked he should have nothing to say? Or does he really hesitate when it is a question of bringing Luitolfo to justice?

Was Eulalia justified for the end she had in view — the vindication of Luitolfo — in misleading Chiappino as she must have done? By so doing would she not give Chiappino good cause for criticism of her?

Although Luitolfo is admirable for his honesty and faithfulness and bravery, does he give the impression of lacking the power of initiative ?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— Artistic Aspects of the Play.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — As the play has but two acts, can it be called a drama ?

Although it does not follow the approved model for a drama, it may be said to have certain dramatic qualities ; for example, the first act leads up to a fine situation both scenically and spiritually. Chiappino seems to reach the climax of possibilities in his character, when all is suddenly changed by the unexpected action of the populace. Luitolfo is for a moment eclipsed in Chiappino's glory, Eulalia is for a moment dazzled. In the second act there is a parallel motive. Chiappino is on the point of attaining worldly success, when Ogniben acts in an unexpected manner and Chiappino is now eclipsed ; Luitolfo comes from under the cloud. Eulalia gives her undivided allegiance to Luitolfo.

The conversations between Chiappino and Eulalia and that between Chiappino and Ogniben are perhaps too long to be thoroughly dramatic, but are they not wonderfully clever as reflecting the personality of the respective characters ? Does the scene between Luitolfo and the bystanders lack in dramatic effectiveness, yet have its own sort of effectiveness in showing by slight hints what has passed during Luitolfo's absence, and in revealing further the character of the populace, of Ogniben and of Chiappino ? (For further remarks on Ogniben, see programme "The Prelate.")

Is it fitting that the first act should be written in poetic form and the second in prose form ?

Is the language of the play rich in allusions or

poetic imagery? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. III., Notes, p. 332.)

Mr. Symons considers that in this play Chiappino fills and possesses the scene; that, of the other characters, "Eulalia is an observer, Luitolfo a foil, Ogniben a touchstone."

Although Eulalia does not appear much in the action, do you not get the impression that she had a great deal to do during that month in bringing Chiappino to his just deserts?

Mr. Fotheringham thinks Ogniben the true hero of the piece, and that the piece is not a play, but forcibly dramatic. "Ogniben is the most definite impersonation in the dramas. The interest is in the characters; the development and catastrophe are in the soul, not in events, and the incidents are clearly invented to present this."

While there are other just as definite impersonations as Ogniben, may it be said that Browning has drawn no other character so full of cool, cynical humor allied with intellectual subtlety?

## SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "IN A BALCONY"

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*Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* —  
The Relation of the Characters to the Crisis.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — What starts the action in "In a Balcony"? Asking the Queen for consent to Norbert's marriage with Constance? Or is it the mode of asking her assent which gave rise to the difficulties of the second situation, and thence to the tragic climax?

There are three distinct situations in this little play. The first is brought out in the opening love-scene between Norbert and Constance; the second, in the Queen's interview with Constance; the third, in the relations of the Queen and the lovers, leading directly to the coming of the guard and to the lovers' last kiss. How are these three situations made to influence one another successively?

Is there much that is necessary for the auditor to know of what took place before the scene opens in order to understand the story? What is it, and how is knowledge of it conveyed? Why should Constance tell Norbert what he knows as well as she, that he is minister, the Queen's favorite, having done

a wonderful year's work, etc. (lines 51-62)? Is this a natural part of her speech for her present aim? What else comes out revealing the situation?

What share of responsibility has each of the three characters in the issue?

Did the wish of Constance for Norbert's future worldly success mean that she did not want him to marry her at all? Her speech (lines 19-38) may be construed how? — that she loves him so much that she does not wish to handicap his brilliant future by having him give her an unnecessary name? Did she want him to marry the Queen? Did she prefer, at least, their "long-planned chance-meetings," "deep telegraphs," etc. to marriage? Or did she simply fear to give up this secret but assured mutual love for a mere name at too great a risk? Does she therefore only desire him so diplomatically to manage his request for her of the Queen that it shall not entail upon him any loss of distinction?

She claims that she loves the Queen and understands her, and that she can be generous but not so easily just. Does she understand herself as well, and how does her dictum that women hate a debt as men a gift apply to her own self here? Does she want to repay the Queen for her "justice" in taking her up because she was the Queen's kinswoman; and if she had less consciousness of that as a debt, would she have been more direct in her policy now?

Is she right in saying that if she could do the asking she could manœuvre it cleverly? In that case is the tragedy to follow all Norbert's fault for his clumsy management? — Or hers for having a crooked policy? Or is it most hers for intervening and overruling another sort of nature to do her way? Is

indirect management the besetting sin of women? From this and the kindred feminine tendency to self-sacrifice, does the fault of Constance come which now starts the tragedy?

But ought Norbert to have consented to adopt her way? Is it natural for men to take ruling from a woman in this way (lines 330-338) when they would in no other more rational way be persuaded to a given view?

If such self-sacrifice and indirect influence as characterizes Constance's action are usual with women, has social life cultivated this in them till it has become second nature, or is it instinctive? Should it be reformed? Can it be?

Does the Queen prove to be what Constance thinks she is?

She comes, first of all, after the mistaken interview with Norbert, to Constance, ready not to credit her hopes of his love till Constance has spoken. Why does she appeal first to Constance? Is this wise and clear-sighted, and also affectionate, loyal, and straightforward?

When Constance then responds as she does to the Queen's trust, the tragedy is let loose. She could have done all she had done without doing the Queen the wrong of misleading her here. Or can anything be said in defence of her reply? She could have withdrawn from her course here; this opportunity having been given her. Why does she not? For Norbert's sake? How far had she a right to mislead another for the sake of the man she loved? How far had she a right to commit him to what was not true for the sake of his material success? Is this reply of Constance's the crisis of the foregoing action?

Perhaps Constance is obtuse here, and does not take it in that the Queen has been misled. If so her "True" is stupid rather than cruel, to the Queen at least. Judging from Constance's words during the rest of the scene with the Queen, should it be considered that she was aware of where her policy was now leading? Is her surprise only due to the revelation of the Queen's fervid heart? Was it this only — the Queen's love — which she had not counted upon?

What is the worth of Constance's "He shall" (line 581)? Has the Queen so revealed the strength of soul to love within her, that Constance is really abashed by her own proved inferiority and feels that this nature has indeed regal rights? Or does she only pity her?

What concern for Norbert has she here? Is she really lacking in sincere love for him? Is her renunciation of him the product of mixed motives, — self-sacrifice both for his sake and the Queen's, joined with the knowledge that she already has his love, which nothing can take from her, and that she can well afford not to have everything, since she has so much? Is her decision, then, "noble and magnanimous," as has been said, marked by that "altruism of motherliness" which is the inherent trait "in all good women"? Or is it the decision of a "radically insincere and inconstant" nature, as has also been said? Or rather is it the natural decision of a more immature yet perhaps also more complex nature than that of either Norbert or the Queen, and of a nature, moreover, whose dependent position in life and at the court necessarily made it a less self-poised and masterly nature than either of



theirs, but one even more prone to manage to have its way?

Constance, says Mr. Wedmore (as quoted by Mr. Symons), is "a character peculiarly wily for goodness, curiously rich in resource for unalloyed and inexperienced virtue." Mr. Symons adds his own view of her love, which he thinks was true and intense up to the measure of her capacity; but her nature was, instinctively, less outspoken and truthful than Norbert's, more subtle, more reasoning. At the critical moment she is seized by a whirl of emotions, and, with very feminine but singularly unloverlike instinct, she resolves, as she would phrase it, to sacrifice *herself*, not seeing that she is insulting her lover by the very notion of his accepting such a sacrifice. Her character has not the pure and steadfast nobility of Norbert's, but it is truly devoted and very human. The Queen, unlike Constance, but like Norbert, is simple and single in nature. She is a tragic and intense figure, at once pathetic and terrible. The part allotted to her is as vivid, poignant, and affecting as words can make it. I am not aware that the peculiarly pregnant motive — the hidden longing for love in a starved and stunted nature, clogged with restrictions of state and ceremony, harassed and hampered by circumstances, and by the weight of advancing years — the passionate longing suddenly met, as it seems, with reward, and breaking out into a great flame of love and ardour, only to be rudely and finally quenched — I am not aware that this motive has ever elsewhere been worked out in dramatic poetry. As here developed, it is among the great situations in literature."

Of Norbert Mrs. Alice Kent Robertson writes (*Poet-love*, Vol. II., pp. 310-314, June, 1890): "He

is an exceptional man in this — that love and not ambition is his ruling motive. . . . Through the intricacies of state-craft [he] has worked his way, keeping one aim in view . . . retaining his simplicity and integrity, and finally through love alone, is enticed to a mode of action foreign to his nature. . . . Not a brilliant man this, perhaps, but what is better, a purposeful one . . . the advocate of truth as the strong thing, he illumines by its steady beam the sinuous path of human endeavor, thereby cheering the heart and reviving one's hope of the heroic. Constance is the character upon which discussion centres, because so very human, therefore complex, therefore interesting. . . . Her critics are too eager to prove her either good or bad, drawing too arbitrary an ethical line through her fascinatingly complex personality. She is neither saint nor sinner, but, like a large proportion of the human race, compounded of both. Human nature should first be 'interesting,' says Matthew Arnold. Whatever may be said for or against Constance she meets this requirement."

But does Constance grow in stature and in capacity for love of a riper sort, like that of Norbert and the Queen in the course of the final scene with them? Through what steps does she attain to this climax of her capacity for love? What does she mean when Norbert returns by telling him she is his now, and not until now, — that, before, he was hers?

Does Norbert understand her present mood till the Queen enters and the dialogue reveals it? How large a share does the Queen have in this dialogue and in ridding the situation of its difficulties before she leaves? Is her silence, from the close of her reply to Norbert after being directly appealed to by him, a

magnificently significant dramatic effect, because so true to nature? Or is it too true for art, giving not enough chance for the actress of the part to make known to an audience her revulsion of feeling, from which the tragic conclusion springs? Should she have been made to swoon? Why not? Or to say some terse word? What assistance has Browning lent the facial expression and attitude, which must be the actress's only means of interpreting her feeling here, in Norbert's words (line 885); and is this trifling observation clew enough to what is passing within the Queen's dizzy silence?

Do Norbert and Constance anticipate what the Queen's silent departure is presently to mean for them?

Can the Queen be blamed for the tragedy?

Must personal love always be selfish? Is this what Constance learns? Or is it that it must be individual, and take no liberties with the natures of other individual souls, either for love's sake or for pity?

Is the choice of imagery, the fluency of the blank verse, such as to fit this little dramatic episode with especial harmony?

## SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "CHILDE ROLAND"

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*Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Mood and Symbolism of Childe Roland's Quest.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — In the story of this knight's quest are the incidents shadowy and indefinite, or are they realistic?

Is there any picture in the series portraying the stages of his progress from beginning to end of the poem which is not visually vivid? Do you derive definite particulars as to shape, color, quality, surroundings, and associations?

Yet does this graphically presented journey at any point make you feel that it should be taken as a literal narrative of events that once really occurred?

And, on the other hand, while it is not to be taken as an actual journey, although all its scenes are sharply outlined to the eye, do you feel, either, that these qualities of definiteness make it present an intellectually distinct conception to the eye of the mind?

Yet are not the scenes of the poem as vivid to you emotionally as they are visually?

If this is the effect of the poem on you, namely, to see its incidents and feel them vividly, but neither

to see them intellectually with unmistakable definiteness and logical coherence, nor to conceive of them as actual occurrences, should you not conclude that the artistic design of the poem is to present images awakening sensations and impressions, instead of thoughts or facts, and in this insensible way to convey the mood and inspirational atmosphere of a series of personal spiritual experiences tending toward a climax of aspiration in Childe Roland's will?

What do you think of the "hoary cripple" of the opening stanza? Need he be taken as an allegorical figure representing the sceptic in religion, the cynic of love, the genius of the materialistic nineteenth century, the herald of death or disease, a tempter to agnosticism or atheism, or vivisectionist medical science or any other particular allegorical type among the many such emblematic ideas suggested, so much as an external embodiment of the hero's inward feeling?

Is all the imagery here just as much a token of the speaker's mental attitude as the air-drawn dagger is of Macbeth's, when it marshalled him the way that he was going?

Is the artistic usefulness of the vivid picturing here, therefore, to induce the right impression of Childe Roland's mood of imperturbable disillusionment in the face of which he sets out on the ominous plain to end his quest for the Round Tower?

Instead of this undertaking being mistaken, sinful, or weak, as it has been assumed to be in order to make it suit the various allegorical interpretations, is it not brave, intrepid to the last degree?

Does it not make the whole idea of the quest inconsistent if it is supposed from the outset to be one which ought not to have been undertaken? And is

so persistent a pursuit of the Tower, as a chosen quest, reckless of risk, disdainful of hatred, the attitude of a weakling, a self-indulgent spiritless soul?

Is the presentation of views of human nature in the poem, — the effect upon the sick man (lines 25–36) of his friends taking him for as good as dead already, the memories of school-fellows turned to for cheer (lines 85–103), becoming a mockery, — a presentation of relative value to the hero's mood, rather than of intrinsic value in the story? The mood of desolation within him, the subjective renunciation of cherished illusions in preference to a cheat, — are these what they portend?

The presentation of Nature, too, growing as it does from the merely barren to the disgustingly hideous, from the oppressively monotonous to the suddenly sinister, brutal, and cruel, the alternately sickening, unmeaning, and malicious, — is all this significant of the successive outlooks of one aware of all life's disheartenments and mocking contradictions who is yet bent upon testing all to the full, without swerving from the course?

Does the final scene depict a mood of failure and warning to others, then, or of spiritual victory and incitement to others?

Why did he address his quest from the first to the Tower, if merely to find it meant disaster? Why had he spent a life in training for the sight (line 180)?

Is the proper end of his quest, then, to attest human capacity, — to win a sense of energy from the most poignant comprehension of what despair and failure mean for all humanity and has meant to its chosen heroes? One proof in his own person, then, of human valor to withstand such spiritual fatalism would

redeem the despair of all his faltering predecessors and bear witness to all men of the ability of humankind. Is this what Childe Roland did as he set the slug-horn to his lips?

Will any more specific meaning so perfectly suit the poem and satisfy so many readers that it may be accepted as its complete purport as consistently and unanimously, for example, as the allegory of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" suits that graphic but unmistakably allegorical journey?

Do any of the following theories satisfy the demands the poem makes upon your sympathy?

Mr. Kirkman, at one of the early meetings of the London Browning Society, considered that "Childe Roland" was suggested by the ballad of Burd Ellen referred to in Shakespeare, but had an allegorical aim. For him it was "the quintessence of cultured thought upon death . . . a continuance of the old 'Ballad Romance of Childe Roland' found in R. Jamieson's 'Illustrations of Northern Antiquities' . . . a few strong shreds of the traditional romance as warp . . . woven in with . . . his own wondrously subtle and consistent woof. . . . 'Childe Roland' may very probably have more than one meaning; one it must have, and that one must needs be something in human experience. . . . There are overwhelming reasons for concluding that this poem describes after the manner of an allegory the sensations of a sick man very near to death. Browning, who has thrown his whole individuality into so many varieties of human life and development of souls, throws himself with all the placid almost unsuspected might of his most subtle genius into the final stage of human development. . . . There is the most close resemblance between 'Pros-



pice' and 'Childe Roland.' They are constructed upon the same keynote. One might be called a prologue to the other. . . . Of all subjects of thought which combine the lights of science and religion we need healthy thought on Death. Physiologists give us the physical aspect of it; divines for the most part retain the erroneous view of it as the king of terrors, ignoring it as the necessary result of organization. The moral aspect of it is reduced neither to moral system, to peace, nor to practicability. The death of the soul is altogether confounded with the physical dissolution of the body. . . . This poem is the only philosophical account of death free from the poor perishable stubble of conventional phraseology." (London Browning Society Papers, Part III., pp. \*21-\*24.)

Treating of "Browning's 'Childe Roland' and its Danish source," M. Sears Brooks follows a similar track, finding a moral suggestion in the Dark Tower of the unknown invisible world which is nearer than we think. "Do not the crippled intelligences of this world inspire us with doubt even while pointing in the right direction? . . . After a life spent in training for the sight, he sees the Tower only at the moment of dissolution. . . . The fear of death and the bitterness of death, is past. He set the slug-horn to his lips, and dauntless blew the note of victory! Who but Browning could lead us thus to the gates of the Eternal? The spiritual conception of the quest, call it fancy or what not, with which Browning has clothed this thought, is indefinite and disjointed only to those who fail to see in the 'round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,' the stony riddle which vexes all the world." (*Poet-lore*, Vol. IV., pp. 425-428, August-September, 1892.)

At a meeting of the Syracuse Browning Society Mrs. J. L. Bagg professed the poem thoroughly unsatisfactory, unless it meant an allegory as specific as this: "The 'hoary cripple' is Hope, who deludes with false promises. . . . The 'ominous tract'. . . is the land where reason rules. Processes of the intellect hide rather than reveal 'the Dark Tower' . . . the stronghold of the mysteries of life and death . . . the whence, why, and whither of the soul. . . . 'This quest' [is] the effort to solve the insoluble. 'The Band' [is] all thoughtful courageous souls who in the ages have sought for light on these problems and failed to find it . . . He turns from the highway of Hope into . . . the vast plains of imagination, speculation, . . . illusion. He has forsaken the safe road of reality, knowledge, experience. The 'stiff blind horse' may be Pegasus, the winged steed overworked, overstrained in these fields of haze and fantasy. . . . The 'sudden little river' . . . sweeping away the remnant of reason. . . . [So] abandonment to the unchecked fancy leads to . . . insanity. . . . With 'brake, wheel, harrow' he tortures himself to fix more firmly his belief in the superstitions, fancies, insanities, of his disordered vision. . . . 'A great black bird,' the messenger of the destroying angel. . . . The plain . . . changed to mountains. So in great crises . . . there comes sudden disappearance of the unrealities . . . the true . . . appears, . . . mountains to be scaled . . . every-day duties done. . . . Shall I join 'the Band' whose wail is 'Lost! lost!' Am I *defeated* because I cannot speak the 'Open Sesame' that shall disclose the Dark Tower's secrets? No! A sluggard I have been. To my lips I set my dilatory horn, summoning every power of my being to waken from

dreaming, to redeem the far-spent day by *being* and *doing* . . . LESSON OF THE POEM. — The secrets of the universe are not to be discovered by exercise of the reason, nor . . . reached by flights of fancy, nor duties loyally done . . . recompensed by revealment. A life of *becoming*, *being*, and *doing* is not loss, nor failure, though the Dark Tower forever tantalize and . . . withhold." (Syracuse Browning Club, pp. 11-14.)

To Mrs. R. G. Gratz Allen, also, in "The Journey of Childe Roland," the poem tells the story of a pilgrim who, disregarding his "first keen intuitions, obeys the suggestion of the hoary deceiver at the stile, and turns aside into the malarial meadow of sophistry and pathless chaos, wandering hither and thither, finding himself at last surrounded by the ugly heights of Doubting Castle, one more victim of Giant Despair . . . he is fully aware of the object of the cripple. . . . Herein consists Roland's sin: he chooses to be led astray. . . . The soul has lost its way and cannot retrace its steps. . . . 'Virtue once dethroned will never return to take her place.' . . . The soul of Roland, however much it has stumbled and wandered, is redeemed through [the final] shrill trumpet-blast of warning . . . to those on the plains below. . . . This is not challenge; that were indeed mere braggadocio. It is simply the tersest statement of an awful fate given in the haste of death. It is not the heroism of 'constant allegiance to an ideal,' but rather the majesty of despair; the divine throe of benevolence." (*Poet-lore*, Vol. II., pp. 578-585, November, 1890.)

In the discussion at the London Browning Society, after Mr. Kirkman's paper on "Childe Roland," Dr. Furnivall said he had asked Browning if it was an allegory, and in answer had on three separate occasions

received an emphatic "No;" that it was simply a dramatic creation called forth by a line of Shakespeare's. Mr. Sargent had "come to the conclusion that it had nothing to do with death. The idea in the poet's mind was suggested by the ballad, . . . simply the story of a man setting out on an adventure . . . who finding after great labour the result was not what he expected or hoped for, yet goes on bravely . . . finding the work of life neither grand nor romantic, yet goes on unflinching." Miss Drewry looked upon the poem as an allegory of life. The Dark Tower meant Truth. Mrs. Orr, in commenting on this discussion, sympathized especially with Miss Drewry, and held that while Browning would deprecate the assertion that he meant in any poem something not given in his words, he "would consider himself understood by any mind which found in it the reflection of some crisis in its own life. . . . I have always seen in the poem . . . the picture of a dream-like struggle in which courage is stimulated by fear and difficulties are out of proportion to their visible cause, and the goal only eludes us to show that it was close at hand, and attainment may alike prove victory or defeat. . . . This certainly is the mood of the poem, whatever its idea might be; and there is nothing incompatible with such a mood in supposing that the idea of a striving after truth underlay it: for truth, as Browning describes it, is always relative and shifting and may look like a tower, but behaves like a will-o'-the-wisp."

The following anti-allegorical view of the poem, given by Mr. Arlo Bates, in the "Critic," May 8, 1886, was called out by a paraphrase of the poem by Mr. J. Esten Cooke, accompanied by a perplexed appeal for some explanation of his query, "Is the Dark

Tower the tower of unfaith, and is the poet describing the drift of his age ? ” “ The difficulty . . . of most people who stumble over Browning seems to be a forgetting of the prime principle that the essential quality of the highest poetry is that it says something that can be said in no other way. . . . Poetry of the highest order . . . has a message of which it is at once the substance and the vehicle. Therefore, however interesting an allegorical interpretation like that offered by Mr. Cooke may be, it must from the nature of the case be unsatisfactory. . . . Yet it is sometimes possible to give a clew that helps another into the poet's mood ; so without meaning to analyze, to expound, and least of all to explain a poem from which I would fain keep my hands as reverently as from the Ark, I ask the poet's pardon for saying that to me ‘ Childe Roland ’ is the most supreme expression of noble allegiance to an ideal — the most absolute faithfulness to a principle regardless of all else. . . . Ineffable weariness begins the poem. . . . Then negative objective desolation. . . . Then subjective misery. Then . . . a suggestion of conflict that brings an overwhelming impression that all the powers of evil actively pervade the place ; — then the Round Tower ! What does it matter what the tower signifies — whether it be this, that, or the other ? If the poem means anything, it means, I am sure, everything in this line. The essential thing is that, after a lifetime pledged to this — whatever the ideal be — the opportunity has come after a cumulative series of disappointments, and more than all amid an overwhelming sense that failure must be certain where so many have failed ; where nature and unseen foes and the ghosts of all his baffled comrades stand watching for his destruc-

tion, where defeat is certain and its ignominy already cried aloud by the winds of heaven. And the sublime climax comes in the constancy of the hero. . . . The nominal issue of the conflict is no matter, because the real issue is here ; with the universe against him, with the realization of all this, dauntless he gives his challenge ! . . . One cannot read it without a tingling in every fibre of his being, and a stinging doubt whether in such case he might not have been found wanting. I cannot conceive of anything more complete, more noble, more inspiring."

Can all the allegorical interpretations here illustrated be questioned on the score of contradicting the poem itself or being self-contradictory in some way ?

Why should the poet, if he meant to show spiritual failure or physical death, represent his hero as telling his own story ? Would a dead or a morally lost man survive to tell his story in the first person ? In comparison with " *Prospice*," which is evidently a " look forward " toward death, does the framing of this poem admit of the future tense, as that does, and the anticipation of the eternal life to be won from the " *Arch Fear* " ? Are there such differences between the two poems — with reference, for example, to the dull persistence despite imminent failure in " *Childe Roland* " in contrast with the vigorous fight with an anticipated fear in " *Prospice*," to the solitude of the one and the glow of love over the other — as to make it evident that the sorer trials of the soul enduring life are painted in the one, the summoning of the senses to bridge the momentary anguish of death, in the other ?

Is the influence of Bunyan's allegory accountable for the theory of " *Childe Roland* " which makes his

quest a culpable lapse into unfaith in orthodox religion? Why should the poet call a fall from grace a "quest"?

Is it best in one's reading of this poem to be content with the mood which certainly can be derived from it, without narrowing its symbolism to any exclusive train of allegorical ideas, and without foisting ideas upon the poet which at best must be doubtfully his? Does the limitation necessary to pin its large symbolism to any particular allegory limit its beauty and emotional force, and its allusional applicability to universal experience?



## SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "MR. SLUDGE, 'THE MEDIUM'"

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I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Intellectual and Moral Attributes of Mr. Sludge.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — When Mr. Sludge first appears upon the scene, he is in an abject state of penitence seemingly, asking forgiveness of his patron for this his first fault in cheating. How does his patron evidently receive his first excuse, that his mistake was due to the last glass of Catawba?

Sludge produces a good effect with the undeveloped spirit that owes him a grudge, but counteracts the impression by bringing in his patron's sainted mother again. He finally gains control of the situation by promising to gratify the curiosity of his patron, and reveal the tricks of the trade in return for money and silence.

Does Mr. Sludge hit a truth when he declares the people who encourage mediums are just as much to blame as the mediums themselves, and that they are like birds hanging with half a claw to a perch made of their conceit in their own opinions, being quite unconscious of the shakiness of their own perch, but very much alive to the shakiness of their neighbors' perches?

In the illustrations Mr. Sludge elaborates to prove this point, does he not show a clever appreciation of the ways of humanity ?

Does he make a pretty fair case out for David by his showing how the encouragement of the company drags the boy farther and farther along the road of romancing, but that the final dive into falsehood complete comes only when one of the company professes scepticism, and David, to save all the others from being dubbed fools, must be upheld at any cost ?

Would a doubting Thomas be likely to settle the question in the way Mr. Sludge says, by concluding that David's tales are not any harder to swallow than those of Captain Sparks would be ?

To the objection that David should pay the penalty for the half-lie in the first place, Mr. Sludge makes the most natural rejoinder ; would you in the same place have done any differently ? Does he succeed in showing how hard it would be to confess that first half-lie when all the influences were directed toward his not doing it ?

Is it true to human nature that people when they are infatuated with an idea will excuse and overlook and palliate any facts that might upset their faith ? — as Sludge represents his patrons as doing when they excuse his mistakes on the score of his being only a medium by means of which undeveloped spirits sometimes play tricks, or else of his being merely human, so that what the spirits say may not be perfectly expressed by him. The infatuation must be very great that would accept the Shakers' Hymn in G for a thirty-third sonata of Beethoven (Beethoven wrote thirty-two piano sonatas). Does Sludge here probably exaggerate the credulity of his followers ?

He answers that objection himself by saying that the guests at a private *séance* are not going to cast discredit upon their host's medium any more than upon his wine, but his patron interposes that they do doubt sometimes. Sludge's nimble wit is ready for this contingency, however. In that case his patrons will declare that the doubts produced a bad atmosphere for the medium. And should this argument fail, there is a last resource; do you think the last resource proposed by Sludge would be efficacious?

Here (line 381) Sludge gives a touching picture of himself longing for truth, feeling hatred of the people who are ruining his soul; does he seem to have any notion that regeneration should come through himself?

But having gone so far, the step from lying to cheating is easily made, especially when his patrons keep urging him to give further illustrations of his power. Does this excuse him?

Having shown how the desire of his patrons has led him on from point to point in his attempts to meet their requirements, Sludge next proceeds to divulge some of the methods by which he accomplishes his results (line 434). Does the credulity of his audience also help him here?

Does the description he gives of the way mediums get information about everybody serve fully to explain all cases of so-called mind reading, as well as supposed communications from the other world?

Having shown how he manages to know things that everybody would say he could not know, he then proceeds to show how, once let people accept unquestioningly the imposture, it is possible to make them swallow almost anything.

He is quite right, is he not, when he objects to feeling any sort of gratitude to the people who have led him into all this?

In his strictures upon the women who come to consult him, does he mean to insinuate that he took some liberties with them on the score that heavenly manners would be more free than those allowed on earth? And that he did this partly in revenge for the way they treated him, — coddling him, that is, only on the ground that he was a medium?

What do you think of his next argument, that he bolstered up religion, and that the best way to meet the lies of the doubters is to exaggerate lies on the other side?

Miss Stokes, in getting a "live coal" from the spirit world through Sludge, has proved the existence of the soul; is not this a gain, even if it come by means of cheating? So thinks Sludge.

He will even go farther; he finds a certain pleasure in these lies for their own sake. Is this consistent with his desire for truth previously expressed (line 694)?

He, however, reiterates that one does not go into the mid-bog of lying without some qualms or without encouragement, and when the lie is discovered, such an outcry is made that one would suppose he had been guilty of treating Miss Stokes with indignity. He asks only that justice may be done him, and the part his followers have had in his fall considered.

In line 732 fol. he hits at the scientific investigators of spiritual phenomena, then at the novelists who make use of spiritualism to embellish their stories, then at the social light who uses it to make himself conspicuous and important. From Sludge's point of view, are his strictures of these different classes justified?

From line 792 on, he proceeds to build himself up instead of tearing down his patrons. He admits all his cheating, and then proceeds to show how even behind his cheating there is a mysterious something which he cannot comprehend, and which makes him feel that he does not do things of himself. Are the steps in this argument well taken? In its application to himself, however, does he not make the mistake of supposing there is a constant external interference of a mysterious force in the affairs of every-day life, instead of life itself being a manifestation of an underlying, constant, mysterious force?

Is he not perfectly consistent, when he insists that the warnings he gets from stars and apple-pips are just as likely to be real as his patrons' more internal warnings not to go on a journey, etc.?

In his argument that nowadays small things have become great, he is using a true scientific illustration, is he not? And he truly presents the deductions that preachers make from it, but how does he again misapply it to his own case in representing himself as a child?

Does he make a good point when he says that everybody has some unexplained occurrences in his life, and lets them remain unexplained while he seizes upon such occurrences and builds a system out of them? How much of this latter part of the talk is meant to bolster himself up against the objection that he is too humble an instrument to have such an acquaintance with the ways of the Infinite?

He enlarges once more (line 1280) upon the fact that he is not so sure his cheating is cheating; does he here follow out an argument entirely opposed to the one in which he said all the lying and cheating grew out of the first half-lie? Now *truth* grows out of

the first lie. Is there any high philosophical sense in which Sludge's dictum, —

"I tell you, sir, in one sense, I believe  
Nothing at all, — that everybody can,  
Will, and does cheat : but in another sense  
I'm ready to believe my very self —  
That every cheat's inspired, and every lie  
Quick with a germ of truth."

Even if there be any philosophical sense in which it might be said to be true, it is not a doctrine suitable to ethics or the conduct of life, is it ?

His last defence is that he makes life more agreeable and more of a success to people than they can make it for themselves, and why should he be blamed, any more than a poet, who tells about things that never happened ? He simply acts the same sort of thing that they write. What is the moral difference between a poet and a Sludge ?

What effect does the defence have on his patron, and how does Sludge reveal the thorough degradation of his character in his final attitude toward his patron ?

It may be said that Sludge's intellectual qualities include a penetrating observation of humanity's foibles, and a wide acquaintanceship with religious and philosophical thoughts of the century, — in fact, he might be called a picker up of learning's crumbs in many directions, — and, though not always getting his learning straight, he had a wonderful, inborn facility for illustrating all his points with graphic examples and apt images. Has he not also a knack for twisting any philosophical or religious opinions he knows of into sophistical arguments in defence of his own practices ?

Does this result in his saying many things that are in themselves true, but which in his application of them become false ?

His moral qualities, on the other hand, are resolvable into absolute egotism. His aim in life is to benefit himself materially, and in order to do this he makes use of the weaknesses he sees about him, and though he despises his patrons, does not scorn their help. In those eloquent bursts of oratory where he describes himself as longing for the truth and even goes so far as to represent himself as sacrificing the integrity of his own soul for the benefit of society, is he expressing genuine emotion, or only, after his habit, playing upon the credulity of his patron, Mr. Horsefall?

The main proposition in his whole contention is that, suppose him to be a cheat and found out in his cheating, he does not deserve the ill-treatment he gets from society, because so many classes are tarred with the same stick, — not only those who are doubting and yet really anxious to be convinced of supernatural communications, but the cold-blooded investigator who scouts everything, but enjoys the investigations; the novelist or poet who scouts, but caters to the public taste for mystery; the diner-out who disbelieves, but makes it an interesting fad in conversation. While there is certainly truth in what he says and he really teaches a good moral lesson to these various classes in society to the effect that it would be better for them not to deceive themselves, and better for them to have larger charity for men like Sludge, does he show his moral obliquity by never applying the lesson to himself, and by considering himself justified in cheating because others cheat? To excuse your own sins on the ground that other people sin, is the lowest possible form of defence, is it not?

In the second part of his defence it might be intel-



lectual obliquity instead of moral obliquity which makes Sludge fail to see the distinctions between a wide application and an egotistical application of the truths of the mysteries of the universe. Did he really believe that he received warnings from stars and apple-pips, or was he again giving his patron something which he thought would tell in his favor?

Aside from the particular type of character under scrutiny in this poem, can it be said to be a fair presentation of spiritism as it is now understood; or does it reflect the poet's own absolute disbelief in any spiritualistic phenomena whatever?

Is it not a clever stroke of genius on Browning's part to make a medium damn the whole spiritualistic movement, in the course of his defence of his own practices?

This experience of Browning's own was recorded in the London "Spectator" thirty years ago (Jan. 30, 1869), by a Mr. James Knowles: "Mr. Robert Browning, of whose keen study of the subject his poem of 'Mr. Sludge the Medium' would be alone sufficient proof, tells me that when he was in Florence, some years since, an Italian nobleman (a Count Ginnasi of Ravenna), visiting at Florence, was brought to his house, without previous introduction, by an intimate friend. The Count professed to have great mesmeric or clairvoyant faculties, and declared, in reply to Mr. Browning's avowed scepticism, that he would undertake to convince him somehow or other of his powers. He then asked Mr. Browning whether he had anything about him then and there which he could hand to him, and which was in any way a relic or memento. This, Mr. Browning thought, was because he habitually wore no sort of

trinket or ornament, not even a watch-guard, and might, therefore, turn out to be a safe challenge. But it so happened that by a curious accident he was then wearing under his coat-sleeves some gold wrist-studs to his shirt, which he had quite recently taken into use, in the absence (by mistake of a sempstress) of his ordinary wrist-buttons. He had never before worn them in Florence or elsewhere, and had found them in some old drawer where they had lain forgotten for years. One of these gold studs he took out and handed to the Count, who held it in his hand awhile, looking earnestly in Mr. Browning's face, and then said as if much impressed, '*C'è qualche cosa che mi grida nell' orecchio, "Uccisione, uccisione!"*'" ('There is something here which cries out in my ear, "Murder, murder!"')

"And truly [says Mr. Browning] those very studs were taken from the dead body of a great-uncle of mine, who was violently killed on his estate in St. Kitt's, nearly eighty years ago. These, with a gold watch and other personal objects of value, were produced in a court of justice as proof that robbery had not been the purpose of the slaughter, which was effected by his own slaves. They were then transmitted to my grandfather, who had his initials engraved on them, and wore them all his life. They were taken out of the night-gown in which he died, and given to me, not my father. I may add, that I tried to get Count Ginnasi to use his *clairvoyance* on this termination of ownership also; and that he *nearly* hit upon something like the fact, mentioning a bed in a room; but he failed in attempting to describe the room — situation of the bed with respect to windows and door. The occurrence of my great-uncle's mur-

der was known only to myself, of all men in Florence, as certainly was also my possession of the studs."

Mrs. Orr says that Browning affirmed, in a letter of July 21, 1883, that the account is correct in every particular, but he added these significant words: "My own explanation of the matter has been that the shrewd Italian felt his way by the involuntary help of my own eyes and face."

Writing on the subject of "'Mr. Sludge' and Modern Spiritualism," in *Poet-lore* (Vol. III., pp. 84-86, February, 1891), Dr. Morris Jastrow says: "That Sludge is for the poet the type of the spirit medium, and not merely a worthless individual who happens to be in the spiritualists' camp, is clearly indicated by the title 'Mr. Sludge "The Medium."'" To my mind it is equally beyond dispute that the interpretation of modern spiritualism which results from the portrayal of Sludge is the one which Browning himself accepts, or at least accepted at the time of writing the poem. For him, modern spiritualism is merely another term for fraud and deception.

"It consists of two parties — the foolish who are deceived, and the scoundrels who practise deceit. In accounting for its existence, he takes into consideration but one factor, — the desire of weak natures for mystery. The supply of mediums is regulated simply by the demand for them.

"This view I hold to be both superficial and unsatisfactory. No great movement, whether in the social, political, or religious field, can be explained by a small motive, and dishonesty and fraud are small motives. . . . The fraud and deception are attendant circumstances; they are not the causes of the movement, and as little as they can account for the rise of

spiritualism, can they answer the question as to its vogue. . . . There are two reasons, it seems to me, for the rise and spread of modern spiritualism, — the one of a general character, the other of a special. The general one, which applies to other ages as well as our own, is the proneness of the human mind for mysticism. . . . The other reason of a special character as applying more particularly to our own age, is the strong reasoning spirit prevailing among us.”

Does not Sludge’s argument go to prove Mr. Jastrow’s first general reason? Does he imply that it is the desire to be deceived that gives rise to spiritualism? Or that it is the proneness for mystery in the human mind which makes it easy to deceive people, and helps on the growth of fraud? In fact, Browning and Dr. Jastrow are really of one mind as to the nature of the initiative cause, are they not? (For other excellent studies of Sludge, see “Mr. Sludge ‘The Medium,’ ” by F. B. Hornbrooke, in “Boston Browning Society Papers,” and on “Mr. Sludge ‘The Medium,’ ” by Edwin Johnson, in “London Browning Society Papers,” Part VII.)

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— Style of the Poem.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — The poem is, of course, a monologue, so that whatever glimpses we get of Mr. Horsefall and the other patrons come through Sludge, usually in quotation marks. Do you get a vivid impression as to the personalities he thus introduces?

An interesting feature of his style is his direct way of introducing supposable scenes and conversations, in illustration of the points he is making in his argument,

for example, the imaginary David and his encouragers, Captain Sparks with his war tales, the hard-headed lawyer Humgruffin. The scene in which he figures (line 450 fol.) is quite complicated. Mr. Horsefall is supposed to take Sludge's place and try some spiritualistic feats upon Humgruffin, and fails, which proves, of course, that Sludge has supernatural powers, for if they detect the spurious character of the writing in one case, they could detect it in the case of Sludge, as a lady present in this imaginary scene is represented as observing, and to whom Sludge replies outside, not inside, the scene. Do these illustrations, into which Sludge falls and falls out with no warning, make the style confusing, until the reader becomes perfectly familiar with Sludge's methods of speech?

Another interesting point about his language is its colloquialness. It is full of slang and hints of allusions, — for example, "very like a whale," which he probably did not know was in "Hamlet," — and references sometimes correct and sometimes incorrect. It has been objected that Browning made a slip in making him say "V notes," for the Americans call them "V's." Otherwise, has the poet made his American allusions correctly?

Do all these points in style give atmosphere and dramatic truthfulness to the portraiture of Sludge?

Objections have been made to this poem, on the score that it contained no musical lines and that it was too dialectical to be poetical; would you answer to this, that though the style is not in itself musical, it is in perfect harmony with the subject of the poem, and if it were any more musical we should not see Sludge as we do? And that the dialectics are not introduced as an end, but as a means for showing up

Sludge through his manner of turning argument to account ?

Mr. Edwin Johnson says : “ Looking at the piece as a whole, the language and the structure seem to be quite what they ought to be, and we don’t want anything altered.”

## SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "THE RING AND THE BOOK"

"The Ring and the Book" . . . Vols. vi., vii., Text and Notes

I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— The Plot of Incident. (Book I.)

The Introductory Essay in *Cambcrwell Browning* (Vol. VI., pp. vii-xxxvi) and the digests prefixed to each division of the poem give suggestions on this and the following Topics and Queries. Compare, also, the "Raw Material of 'The Ring and the Book'" (Appendix, Vol. VII., pp. 331-341).

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is the plot of incident or the plot of character of greater interest to modern readers?

Is it a mistake on Browning's part to relieve the interest in the plot of incident at once by telling the story in Book I.? Or is it a sign of his skill, the poem being designed in this respect so as to enrich the plot interest by making it more complex, and to throw the interest more upon the relation of the characters to the story?

Why does Browning, in drawing his analogy between the way in which the pure gold was hammered, filed, embossed, and made a ring by use of an alloy, and the way in which the pure crude fact preserved in his old yellow book will be wrought into a story by the use of fancy, compare the bare fact with the gold,



and the fancy with the alloy? Is this a strange proceeding for a poet? Should he not have let fancy stand for the more precious material instead of mere alloy?

Is his idea that the office of fancy is to make possible the revitalization of the facts, and that, this done, the fancy is like the alloy, an alien element, separable from that which it has shaped and set in order, the reality itself, just as it all took place, now left intact and whole? (See Introductory Essay, p. x.)

Is this a sound conception of the relation of the poet's imagination to facts and life? Is the convincing presentment of life the proper aim of the poet and the artist?

Is this the reason why a work of art in which the art is prominent, so that it is more noticeable than that which it portrays, is not artistic? And is this why a historic work in which facts predominate over the life that made them is not so true as a work of art dealing even with inaccurate historic material?

Does such a view of the office of imagination degrade genius, or give it endless room to ennoble life?

Will one proof of Browning's success in rekindling the life locked up between the covers of his yellow book be that the later divisions of this poem will increase our interest over that felt in this first book, in which he himself tells us just how he fancies all took place, so that the story will seem even more alive apart from his relation to it?

Is this why an argument or mere recital of *what* happened is duller than a story of *how* it happened, *who* made it happen, etc.?

What light does this throw on the comparative merits of a plot of incident and a plot of character?

What does Browning mean by lines 1323-1356? That his design will be to incite in his readers something of the pleasure of the historic sense, by putting them in sympathy with real life of a long time ago, and to do this in no unreal or merely romantic manner, but to indicate the continuity of the modern life with that past life, accomplishing this real feat in the cloud-land of the imagination? This, he adds, he might do by a selective process. Does he choose rather not one aspect, but many different points of view with design from the first, as these lines show? (See Introductory Essay, p. viii.)

What does he gain by this method? Higher art, more truth, fuller life?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Discussion.* — The Typical Group of Characters: Half-Rome, or The Married Man's Opinion. (Book II.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is the speaker who represents Half-Rome typical or individual?

What sort of public opinion does he represent in speaking of Violante and Pietro, Guido and Pompilia, and the escape with Caponsacchi?

How does he show bias, and what evidence of it can you point out?

Does his desire to be gazette of the news to the man he is gossiping with, and to influence his opinion, lead you to guess anything of his story?

Do his portraits of old Luca Cini and the young curate Carlo reveal humor and knowledge of human nature?

Does he show shrewdness in his way of telling how the murder came to pass? Is his narration to be depended upon for some qualities, if not altogether for

the facts? Is his cynical picture, for example, of the cold comfort Guido's friends proffer him lifelike?

What is his moral outlook upon life? Is his talk so skilfully contrived by the poet as to give you a clew to what his judgment in such a case as this is worth? What is his view of domestic lynch law?

In considering that the civil process of justice is a blundering and inadequate way to cure such wrongs as he supposes to be Guido's, is he altogether ill-advised? Is his alternative proposition to make every husband his own judge and executioner one that throws light on the difficulty or on his own character and personal grievances?

In his character and point of view is he historically true to a full half of public opinion in the seventeenth century?

Is his distinction between the wrongs done a man personally and those done him as to his property and the capacity of the law to redress them, well taken? How would it apply to-day in comparison with then?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Discussion.* — The Typical Group of Characters: The Other Half-Rome, or the Bachelor's Opinion. (Book III.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — What are the main differences between the views of the characters in this murder case held by Half-Rome and by the Other Half-Rome?

Is the speaker who represents the Other Half-Rome a younger man than the one whose view has just been heard? Or is he less of a conservative and more the liberal of his day and generation?

Is his sentimental view of Pompilia due to his bachelorhood or to his general social outlook?

Is he more charitable than Half-Rome toward

Molinism as well as toward Violante? Is his theory applied to the Cardinal that "Trust's politic, suspicion does the harm" (line 484), one that explains his own easy-going disposition, and points the contrast between the portion of public opinion he represents and that represented by Half-Rome?

Is he justified in thinking that Violante's confession did not right her falsity, and that some less superficial way of setting wrong right needed to be devised?

In what opinions of the way this murder came about and of its principals do these two speakers agree?

Do they regard the nobility and the Roman priesthood in the same way?

How does the second speaker's view of the justice of legal processes agree with that of the first speaker?

What different construction does this second speaker put upon the letters, both the first one to the Abate and the others that purported to pass between Caponsacchi and Pompilia? Which construction is the more convincing?

Is the evidence cited by the second speaker given more circumstantially, as if he had followed the case more closely, depending less upon hearsay and his own conjecture, than the other? Is his monologue more dramatic, giving the story each one has to tell? Is the first monologue more descriptive?

What contrasts do the two present in the way in which they speak of Pompilia's motherhood, and in the inferences they draw from Guido's calling "Caponsacchi" outside the door?

What is the moral outlook of this speaker with reference to Guido's right to discipline his wife; to the Governor's and the Archbishop's friendly presumptions in favor of the husband; and, finally,

to the conclusion that Guido was the real enemy of society ?

Has the poet contrived to throw into these monologues a lifelike air of eager excitement over the moot-points and of delight in having so extraordinary a case to talk about ?

IV. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Discussion.* — The Typical Group : Tertium Quid, or the Aristocratic Observer. (Book IV.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is the conclusion justifiable that the dispassionateness of Tertium Quid is no more trustworthy than the partisanship of the others ?

Is the conclusion that dispassionateness guides to no truer knowledge than partisanship opposed to the authority science arrogates ?

Is this conclusion confirmatory of the principle of democracy that each man may contribute to any result a needed and valuable element ?

Is it the points in which these three speakers agree that are trustworthy ? Or those in which they differ ?

Has that which is especially characteristic of each value in the story, whether it shows insight or whether it shows prejudice ? And in this sense, of revealing relative value, is the poet justified in permitting us to get so little actually out of them, because we get so much in seeing how large truth is, and of what variously modifiable elements public opinion is composed ?

What light does this monologue throw on the speaker's character and attainments ?

Is Tertium Quid's point of view really essentially different from Half-Rome's in the opinion taken of Pietro, Violante, and Pompilia, and in his high regard for Guido's possession of rank ?

What does distinguish his monologue especially, then? Its disdain of the commonalty as a whole? Its utter inconsequence? The insincerity which prevents him from coming to any conclusion, since he is not really interested in the case at all, as the other speakers are, except to make use of it for the sake of exhibiting his own cleverness to persons of quality?

Does he agree with the other two speakers in his light opinion of the law?

Are the closing lines of this monologue proof of Browning's ironic way of regarding his pretensions to superiority? (See Introductory Essay, p. xix.)

"The dullest account of all," writes Dr. F. B. Hornbrooke, "is that by *Tertium Quid*, who tries to give a colorless statement of affairs. But we learn from his study why he is uninteresting. It is because he does not take any side, and has no sympathy with anybody. . . . If passionate advocacy sees only one aspect of the truth, passionless indifference misses what is most vital. Feeling is blind to some things, but apathy is blind to everything." ("Some of the Teachings of 'The Ring and the Book,'" *Poet-lore*, Vol. I., pp. 314-320, July, 1889.)

V. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
—The Central Group of Characters: The Count.  
(Book V.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Does the Count show by the manner of his plea what his view of life was?

Are his politeness and smooth humility in opening his speech overdone? Does his gentleness give an impression of genuineness or policy? How does his suave beginning match with his brutal way of regarding his marriage?

Is his defence of himself an implicit attack upon Society, since he holds that if he is to blame he is to blame for a course based on Society's pet institutions, — nobility, the Church, marriage ?

Does judgment of the Count depend upon the question whether his view of marriage was a good one or not ? Or does it depend upon his character and its defects, — his egotism, avarice, cunning, cruelty ? Is there any connection between his view of marriage and his bad qualities ?

Are his attempts to justify himself, as to the letter to the Abate he wrote in Pompilia's name, his threatenings of her when he ought, by his account, to have been cruel, his fear to avenge his wrongs till law had spoken, his arousing from dull despair at the news of his son's birth to right this crowning injustice, — are all these clever, but unconvincing on account of the man's personality, — perceived despite them ? Or are they to be considered as sincere and in keeping with the degree of development that the man had reached ?

Is the weakest part of his defence that which makes him claim that he was alternately moved to hesitation and rapt away by impulse to slay the three ; or that which makes him pose as the reformer of manners, the restorer of the antique virtues of marriage, whose vindication is his due from society for his services to it ? Are these two or three lines of defence consistent with one another ?

VI. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Central Group of Characters : Caponsacchi. (Book VI.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Does Caponsacchi's utter lack of any solicitude to ingratiate himself with the Judges, whom he upbraids for



their shallow judgment, contrast strongly, at the outset, with Guido's truckling manner, and give the keynote to his frank and direct personality? Does his evidence convince the more for this?

Is his story, as he says, the story of the good Pompilia did to him? What are the main stages in this spiritual development?

Does Caponsacchi's own story bear out the opinion of those critics who say that he immediately obeyed the impulse to help Pompilia? Which would be the more admirable, hesitation or immediate decision? Does the answer depend upon the purity of his aims? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. VI., Introductory Essay, pp. xxi and xxii.)

Is the insight of each of these two, Pompilia and Caponsacchi, with regard to each other, proof of their love, or is their high order of intuitional intelligence the basis of their recognition of each other's purity?

Why did not Caponsacchi like two special things Pompilia said (lines 1212-1214, 1249-1254)? Why did he like this other (lines 1290-1298)?

Is Caponsacchi's foreboding of ill at Castelnuevo natural?

Is the impulse to kill the evil man, which Browning makes Caponsacchi regret he did not satisfy, and which rouses Pompilia to her attack, morally justifiable?

Is Caponsacchi's explanation of Guido's relation to Pompilia (lines 1759-1771) a proof of insight, as much as his explanation of her relation to himself? Does it make Pompilia the central motive force of the poem?

What is his "instinct" worth upon the right punishment for Guido, — not death, but leaving him to himself, out of God's ken or man's care?

Is the ideal of life to which Pompilia led him one that would take him outside the Church ?

VII. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— The Central Group of Characters: Pompilia. (Book VII.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is the character morally the strongest in the poem the one with the wisest head ?

Does her monologue give the clearest and least biassed account of all the events and characters of the story ?

What is her view of Violante's deception ? Is it morally and intellectually profound ? Does her analogy of the plants being left to grow where God plants them prove too much, and make human interference of any sort with life unjustifiable ? Or is there a right caution underlying the figure, if it be taken less literally, against such interference as in any way violates the individual quality of the nature one may assume to dispose of for its good ? How does this apply to Violante's arrangement for her marriage ?

Was Violante's wrong, then, not the adoption of Pompilia, but the deceit about it, through that deceit's so warping her own nature that she was led to conceive the second idea of setting her first step right, and so on ? This marriage is really what Pompilia tests her by, is it not ? And is she right ?

If Pompilia had been less genuine and reasonable, and had not taken Guido as if he were genuine and reasonable, would she have aroused his animosity to such a fatal degree ? But in that case would his evil soul have had a greater effect on hers, and saved her some material and physical harm at the expense of her own integrity ?

Is crookedness fought best with a good that is through expediency made half crooked itself, or with the straightest policy of which one is capable ?

Is Pompilia justified in her revolt against her husband, because their souls were estranged ?

Does her story, because it shows her personality in its incorruptibility and instinctive capacity for real wisdom, explain why Guido hated her and plotted to conquer her by ruining her, and also why Caponsacchi loved her and was uplifted by her ?

Does she really misunderstand Caponsacchi's attitude of hesitancy and moral struggle, at first, in the project to rescue her, or is her intuition clear here, also ? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. VI., Introductory Essay, p. xxvi.)

Why was Pompilia's motherhood necessary to what conquest she had over Guido ? Is it fitting that his deepest wrong to her should leave her soul unscathed, and be the means of saving her to punish him ? Why does it do this ? Why does it lend will to her dull desire ?

Would she be less or more admirable if for her own sake, instead of for her child's sake, she had resented cruelty and injustice and fled ?

Is it consistent with her character that her brave onslaught upon Guido at the Inn should be justified by her as for Caponsacchi's sake, instead of for either her own or the child's sake ?

"The question may arise," writes Mrs. Alice Kent Robertson, "given the facts of Pompilia's birth, her ignorance, her extreme youth, is her development into the 'perfect soul' — Caponsacchi's language — consistent ?

"I believe age, as commonly reckoned, to be a

very small factor in the development of character ; that inheritance and experience are all. Though it would seem that Pompilia, by her woful lot, were expiating the sins of her parents, from them or from some far-away ancestor she must have inherited a somewhat that, from the first, marks her the child of purity ; however it may be, the miracle is here.

“ Leaving the question of inheritance, we know that the benefit acquired from book knowledge is comparative, that it is by *experience* alone we learn. . . . In its light the discipline of life takes on altogether new meaning and becomes replete with hope. . . . So it is with our Pompilia. Does she seem to speak with the tongue of angels, by her wisdom far exceeding the limit of her age and condition, she *knows* because she has suffered. Moreover, who shall estimate the extent of the vision that comes to dying eyes ? . . . But suffering is not the sole factor in her development : joy is born with the advent of her child, and through maternity is the woman perfected. . . . With this new joy is woven another, — the while a voice within Pompilia sings ‘ to Rome, to Rome,’ her necessity puts finger forth and summons Caponsacchi.” (*Poet-love*, Vol. I., pp. 263–269, June, 1889.)

VIII. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Institutional Group of Characters : The Legal Experts : Advocate De Archangelis (Book VIII.) and Doctor Bottinius (Book IX.).

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Do the pleas of the two lawyers throw any light on the case ?

Do they reveal very distinctly their different personalities ? Can a picture of the general appearance and manner of these two men be derived from the

way in which the poet has made them present their case? Which is the more solid and which the more brilliant lawyer? What clew to their different fame and nature is given by the plenteous Latin of the one and the varied and light literary allusions of the other? How much are the pleas of these two lawyers due to their own characters? How much to their professional habits and methods? Does either one of them clear the character of his client?

Is Law as an institution to attain social equity and justice satirized in these two books? (See Introductory before cited, p. xxvii.)

Are the closing lines of each lawyer's talk, when he has finished his plea and makes comment upon his labor (Book VIII., lines 1790-1793, and Book IX., lines 1561-1568), consummate touches of real life, vitalizing the aims of the two men in their profession?

Is the speech of each uninteresting in itself, but interesting in the portrayal of human nature?

IX. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Institutional Group of Characters: The Pope. (Book X.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Does the Pope's verdict embody Browning's judgment of the characters, or are his opinions peculiarly his own, and his character, therefore, a dramatic portrait? (See Introductory Essay, before cited; also programme, "The Prelate.")

Is his view of Caponsacchi such a view as Browning would have held?

Does it follow, because his judgments of the Archbishop, the Convertites, of Guido and his brothers are severe, that therefore he is "the genuine Robert Browning who has sat on the papal throne," as Prof.

C. C. Shackford says? ("The Pope," *Poet-lore*, Vol. I., pp. 309-314.) As a matter of fact, did not the poet represent this Pope's judgment of the case according to the record? He reconstructs processes, but are they not implied in the sentence rendered?

But does the poet, in making this Pope have an intuitive vision of the doubt that will revolutionize dogmatic religion yet leave religious or spiritual life essentially the stronger, transcend the bounds of possibility in the character of a genuinely devout and thoughtful Pope of the end of his century?

Has Browning grasped, with relation to this character of the Pope, the prominent characteristics of the time as to the religious ferment which Molinism excited, and which was so in the air that allusion to it in every book of this poem is perfectly in place?

Does a superior and exalted yet veritable human personality emerge before the reader of this book?

X. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Effect of his Sentence on Guido. (Book XI.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — What right has Guido to his claim that he is the victim of the Society that sentences him?

Is his dependence upon Society for his moral backing such as to imply that he has never had any principles of his own? Is virtue necessarily an individual and not a social possession? And is virtue, if based merely upon general social usage instead of being the fruit of personal moral experience, aspiration, and will, undeserving of the name?

"Let Browning remove that false plea of Pompilia's for her wicked husband," says a reviewer: "'So he was made, he nowise made himself.'" Is this a false plea?

If Guido's virtues so-called, — that is, his allegiance to established Church and State — are not in any active sense his own, how about his vices? Are these less passively his own? As soon as he openly and unequivocally expresses them, being forced to it by his desperate case, are they not felt to be the least dishonorable part of him?

Is this what Pompilia meant when she said, in God's "face is light, but in His shadow healing, too; let Guido touch the shadow and be healed"?

Is passing through guilt by sincerity one way to come to a realization of what stanch morality is? And is the passage from an ambiguous to an open malevolence the one way for Guido to begin his spiritual development?

His arraignment of society's hollowness, in so far as it is keen and just, and not merely a cloak for himself, awakens some intellectual respect, does it not? And when at last he leaves pretence as of no further use to him, do his essential and sincere paganism and atheism, now revealed, excite awe rather than contempt?

But does Guido's second monologue add any new traits of character to his first, or merely bring them out from their fawning lurking-places?

Does it reveal more conceivably his hatred of Pompilia?

Is Guido's claim to be fiercely vicious, strong, and manly in his hate, real or a sham? Does he first now when the death psalm-singers arrive become himself aware enough to acknowledge the real weakness of his soul?

Why does the ethical climax of Guido's career hinge upon his genuine good opinion of Pompilia?



XI. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Final Results of the Sentence, Public and Personal. (Book XII.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is the twelfth book superfluous? Or does the Venetian traveller's account of Guido and the Pope give a facet of town opinion on Guido and the Pope which properly supplements the poem?

Why should the lawyers be brought in again? Is their transposition of parts, as to Guido and Pompilia, too ironical, or in keeping with their first appearance?

Does the interest stop with Guido's outcry at the end of Book XI., or would the reader not be content without hearing of Pompilia's death and her child?

Do the conclusions of the Augustinian friar represent the final outcome as the poet regards it?

XII. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Historical Background.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — What literary characteristics of the seventeenth century are illustrated in the poem?

Is the impression given by the poem of a transitional phase in the religious attitude of the world historically true?

Was Molinism really a dangerous heresy, or a theory of the dignity of human nature, which had an element of truth that was valuable? As professed by Fénelon and Madame Guyon, was Molinism the religious impetus of the day? See "Molinos the Quietist," by John Bigelow, and Shorthouse's "Golden Thoughts from the Spiritual Guide of Miguel Molinos;" also, McClintock and Strong's Biblical Encyclopædia, Vol. VI., article "Molinism," Plati-

na's "Lives of the Popes," Fénelon's writings on Molinism and "The Life of Madame Guyon."

Is the presentation of law and custom as it is given through Guido, Half-Rome, the Venetian traveller, and the lawyers, historically accurate?

XIII. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Artistic Design and Style.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Would the poem be more perfect artistically or less so if the institutional group of characters was omitted?

"We can understand why the two lawyers are introduced," says Professor Walker, "but we should acquiesce in their introduction only if we found them equal to the other characters." Is it fair, however, to expect that a poet should so far disregard nature as to make all his characters equal?

"The speeches of the opposing lawyers carry realism to an intolerable prosaic extreme," writes Mr. E. C. Stedman ("Victorian Poets," pp. 334, 335). Is this one of the faults of "The Ring and the Book;" or have the lawyers an integral part in the design, and a place, also, in the light and shade of the whole as a social picture of the great case of the day, and as a humorous relief from the intense coloring of the central group of characters. (See Introductory Essay, before cited.) Have they, moreover, their convincing place as characters true to life and the humors of life?

"The effect [of the design] is stereoscopic, — you see the facts from ever new points of view, little by little the real truth is evolved from the chaos of testimony; little by little the real motives of the actors become manifest. As the process goes on, you catch yourself speculating about each of the *dramatis*

*personæ*, as if he were a character in real life. The complexity of human motive, the wonderful interaction of character and circumstance, the vastness of the soul — all these begin to dawn upon you," writes Dr. A. H. Strong (Lecture on "Poetry and Robert Browning," "Philosophy and Religion," p. 530).

"Guido's fate might have been left uncertain until the end with no loss that we can discover, and with very considerable advantage," says a reviewer in *St. Paul's*. What is to be said for and against this? With the plot of incident the dominant interest, would the plot of character thrive as well?

Is Browning's introduction of himself in the first book as the artist re-creating the story an artistic mistake? Is it a departure from his socially conceived structure of the poem, or a fulfilment of it?

Is the style of each monologue different, and adapted to suit the character of the speaker? How is this shown?

Pompilia's speech surely should be devoid of literary allusions and classical quotations, and be marked by the utmost simplicity and sweetness. Is it? The Pope's ruminations, to be characteristic of Innocent XII., should be those of a grave but not frigid nature; they should be redolent of Church history and philosophical lore, and warm with a protecting sympathy for the common people. Caponsacchi's indignant and grief-stricken speech should not be bare of signs of courtly and literate allusions. Do the allusions and diction of these and the other books arise from the nature of the characters and suit them dramatically? Why, for example, does Guido talk of his *omoplat*? Is this a pedantry of Browning's or a pedantry of Guido's, who was skilled, he tells us, in anatomy? Could

such a character as De Archangelis help regaling the rudges with amusing quirks of Latinity ; or Bottini Jesist quoting Virgil and telling anecdotes of the saints ?

Is it a sign of the "unevenness of the work," as has been said, that the speeches of Pompilia, Caponsacchi, and the Pope are so distinguished above the rest for poetic beauty ; or is there dramatic reason why these should be so distinguished ? And, also, that the others should not be ?

Whenever the style rises towards an exalted or purely lyric strain, as in the passage at the end of the first book addressed to Mrs. Browning as "Lyric Love," is this in keeping ? Have the rougher passages a different but equally valid justification ?

Is "The Ring and the Book" a work of which "a great part might be lost without detriment to the world," as has been said by Professor Walker, or is it a prodigious example of the truth of Mr. Birrell's statement in "Obiter Dicta" that "it is plain truth to say, no other English poet, living or dead, Shakespeare excepted, has so heaped up human interest for his readers ?"

Is the inner meaning of "The Ring and the Book" separable from its artistic structure or conveyed by it ?

What is its inner meaning ? That, although truth is a relative thing only, and not to be attained through human testimony nor through mere intellectual processes, it is yet real in its relation to life, and in the appeal it makes to the intuitional intelligence of each individual soul ?

Is the idea of the supremacy of the individual over his own career an implicit lesson of the poem ? How does Pompilia's story illustrate this ? "Let Brown-

ing get rid of that unpleasant conversation with the Archbishop," says a reviewer. Would the poem be stronger philosophically, if this clash between the Church and the individual conscience were left out?

Is Browning partial to the artist in claiming for fancy so large a share in the revelation of truth? In what special sense does he use the terms "fact" and "truth"?

Is the verse of "The Ring and the Book" related organically to its design?

If so, the emotion belonging to each character portrayed will suit it and the circumstances under which it is acting, and the expression will affect the verse so that it will attain a high degree of intrinsic beauty in some of the books where this sort of beauty suits the aim, and in others will attain only a relative beauty, however high in degree, as measured by its lower level of success in the different aim here desired; and thence it will follow that persons judging by standards of beauty in verse which regard form as separable from content and to be manipulated and liked in itself, will approve of certain of the books, "Pompilia," "Caponasacchi," "The Pope" (inconsistently including both of Guido's speeches also, perhaps, and other bits here and there), and condemn the others. Is this why Mr. Sharp, for example, representing many others, says that "The Ring and the Book" enshrines poetry which no other than our greatest could have written," and "has depths to which many of far inferior power have not descended"? Is he wrong, therefore, in concluding that it is, "regarded as an artistic whole, the most magnificent failure in our literature," since he is judging it as an artistic whole without reference to its artistic design?

Is it fair to condemn a man for failing in doing what he did not mean to do, and to try him by the requirements of a design the judge might have had in his place if he had been doing the man's work, but which the man himself did not have, while he did have another distinctly revealed and illustrated?

Is the judgment of many of the critics unconvincing because irrelevant, the question being not what is superior verse, but whether, in each case, the verse is effectively made one with the emotion and character portrayed?

Does "The Ring and the Book" as an artistic whole bring out the character interest of each of its parts with appropriate verse-expression, so that form and content are organically related, and all the parts made contributory again to the whole as a symmetrical organism?

Mr. Arthur Beatty perceives "a great and organic difference . . . in the general character and atmosphere of the several books" which is due "in no slight degree" to its dramatic character. For example, in *Half-Rome*, wherein the speaker is the married man jealous of his wife, who sides with Guido, the verse is characterized by "no ornament which is incompatible with a poetic interpretation of the low views of life represented by him. . . . The verse of the *Other Half-Rome* in which a chivalrous bachelor speaks, is far different. . . . His eyes are raised to:—

'Little Pompilia, with the patient brow  
And lamentable smile on those poor lips,  
And under the white hospital array,  
A flower-like body,'

and he sees all in relation to her. These the opening lines give its whole atmosphere; and it is distinguished

by its frequent beautiful imagery, especially of flowers. The verse is singularly sweet."

Examining with reference to the strophe, or group of lines constituting a single flow of thought or emotion, the monologues of the main characters, Mr. Beatty finds that those "in the first monologue of Guido average seventeen lines, in the last, ten lines. Caponsacchi's average nine and a half lines, Pompilia's nine, and the Pope's fifteen and a half. These figures show that the Pope, in keeping with his character, employs strophes which are longer than the average length of any other character. . . . He goes over the case, weighs, ponders, and 'lets flow his thoughts forth.' The substratum of Pompilia's and Caponsacchi's words, on the other hand, is 'not thought,' but a sublime emotion. Their verse is therefore more intense, with its shorter and burning periods. Though Pompilia's strophes average almost as long as Caponsacchi's, his often run to a greater length than any of hers. 'He speaks rapidly, angrily' speech that smites . . . 'blow after blow.' . . . Pompilia's speech is the 'low sighing of a soul after the loud ones' . . . in beautifully equitable verse. . . . The change in form of the strophes of the first and last speeches of Guido is very significant. In the first he speaks as 'Count Guido,' surrounded with the conventionalities of a proud and exclusive society, . . . now with mock mildness, now with passion, always with the most crafty argument . . . But in the second . . . as a condemned man . . . all the sham drops away."

Again examining these monologues as to metres, Mr. Beatty records that the use made of them in the different books "shows a fine sense of characterization. Pompilia and the Pope use the largest percentage of



the iambic line, — seventy and sixty-three per cent respectively. In their calm and, in a sense, dispassionate view of the case, they are calm and measured in their verse. Their use of the trochaic-logaëdic verse [made up of trochaic and dactylic metre] is about the same — twenty seven per cent. Of the agitated iambic-logaëdic [iambic and anapæstic] they make a very slight use — only three and ten per cent respectively. In the rapid angry speech of Caponsacchi the percentage of iambic lines falls to fifty-six and the trochaic-logaëdic to twenty-three, . . . the agitated iambic-logaëdic rises to twenty-one per cent. Guido in his first defence has a percentage of fifty-two of iambic lines, twenty-four each of trochaic-logaëdic and iambic-logaëdic. In his second speech sixty-one per cent of the lines are iambic, fifty-three trochaic-logaëdic, and only six per cent iambic-logaëdic. This last change is significant in the highest degree. . . . In his earnest plea for life there is no place for aught but earnest words.”

Again, as to the cæsural pause, another important element of blank verse, Mr. Beatty’s scrutiny shows that the Pope’s lines are marked by regularity of the cæsura, producing a closer verse and a corresponding lack of variety in the cadences. The feminine cæsura, the pause coming after an unaccented syllable, giving a more broken flow to the verse and indicating emotion or mental disturbance, and the masculine, the pause coming after an accented syllable and expressive of equanimity and calm reason, are used equitably by the Pope, fifty per cent of each. “Pompilia shows a preference for the masculine cæsura, using sixty-three per cent to forty-seven per cent of the feminine. . . . Guido in his first speech uses sixty-six per cent of

feminine, and in the last speech fifty-two per cent, a change significant" of the altered mood. Caponsacchi's verse is smoother, using forty-five per cent of feminine to fifty-five per cent of masculine cæsuras. As to the place of the cæsura, it is remarkable that for the masculine cæsura after the second accent, "making the most equable rhythm possible in English verse, . . . Pompilia shows a decided preference." In these placings of the cæsura Caponsacchi shows a "wide variety of rhythms;" the Pope the greatest variety, the movement of his verse being "freer and bolder than any of the others." Guido's two speeches reflect a difference corresponding with that evidenced in other respects.

The fusion affected in blank verse by run-on lines affords another evidence of characteristic differences, upon which Mr. Beatty reports that "Pompilia's verse remains more within the limits of the line than the others. . . . Her thought moves in smaller circles, and is at the extreme from the Pope. . . . Guido and Caponsacchi take a middle place, . . . although Guido has rather the most."

The test of appropriate effectiveness in reading aloud should give in a more synthetic way corroboration of such detailed analysis as this. Does it? In all such observations as to the dramatic character of verse, personal impression decides, of course; but it may be claimed that it does not decide arbitrarily, and that the conclusion is based upon evidence which is derived from the facts.

In his "Primer of English Verse" (p. 224), Professor Corson affirms that "All things considered, the greatest achievement of the century in blank verse is Robert Browning's 'The Ring and the

Book.' I don't mean the greatest in bulk (although it *is* that, having 21,134 verses, double the number of the 'Paradise Lost' ); I mean the greatest achievement in the effective use of blank verse in the treatment of a great subject — really the greatest subject, when viewed aright, which has been treated in English Poetry — vastly greater in its bearings upon the highest education of man than that of the 'Paradise Lost.' Its blank verse, while having a most complex variety of character, is the most dramatic blank verse since the Elizabethan era. Having read the entire poem aloud to classes every year for several years, I feel prepared to speak of the transcendent merits of the verse. One reads it without a sense almost of there being anything artificial in the construction of the language ; and by artificial I mean *put consciously into shape*. Of course it *was* put consciously into shape ; but one gets the impression that the poet thought and felt spontaneously in blank verse. And it is always *verse* — though the reader has but a minimum of metre consciousness. And the *method* of the thought is always poetic. This is saying much, but not too much. All moods of the mind are in the poem, expressed in Protean verse."

## SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "RED COTTON NIGHT-CAP COUNTRY"

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"Red Cotton Night-cap Country" . . . .	x	I	283

*Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* —  
The Story and its Relation to the Style.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — The story alone is quite simple, as may be seen by the abstract given in the Notes referred to above; but, as Browning treats it, it becomes complex, not only on account of the character portrayal he has woven into it, but also because of the way in which he has chosen to tell the story. The poet, instead of relating it in simple narrative form, beginning at the beginning and marshalling events as they occurred, casts the poem in the form of a conversation with his friend Miss Thackeray. Having done this, would it be at all natural for him to plunge right into the story the moment he met his friend? On the other hand, would it be natural for him to talk for a thousand lines and more before he begins his story? However this might be, are any ends served by this long preliminary talk (Part I.) with his friend?

Although it seems like a discursive sort of talk leading nowhere in particular, does not the poet constantly give information as to the country which

formed the general surroundings, the church which had a special connection with the story, and the house which was the actual abode of the actors in the drama? Does the lengthy discussion on night-caps and fiddles carry the thought onward toward the story, or serve only as a humorous embellishment of the conversation?

Is the first indication of the tint, as it were, of the story given when the poet asks the question (line 332), "Why not Red Cotton Night-cap Country?" Is not this a distinct step in the direction of the story?

Having at last pointed out the spot where he declares he will prove that a night-cap of visionary red gleams, and having mentioned the owner's name, he proceeds to tease his companion by not telling her his reasons for considering this the veritable red spot; is this teasing talk merely a humorous adornment to the conversation, or is it full of hints as to the real facts of the hero's life, combined with misleading inferences? Are there some hints such as that in lines 737-739, "He had an open hand . . . Or stop — I use the wrong expression here, — An open purse," which cannot be understood until the story has been told?

When even the description of the heroine reveals nothing worse than that she wore a wig, Miss Thackeray is represented as making a most conventional summary of the facts she has gathered, and declares he has failed to prove that any glimmer of red can be found in this white-cotton night-cap neighborhood. Does this long speech, though not carrying the story on at all directly, yet indirectly do so, by furnishing a climax of wrong inferences which forces the poet to divulge his bit of tragedy at last?

Before telling the story, however (Part II.), the poet has a preliminary word to say : what is the gist of the elaborate image the poet here unfolds ?

Do you agree with his conclusions that that part of opinion surviving from the past which stands firm should be left standing as long as it is any use for the guidance of individuals or society, and that that part which has become mere rubbish should be cleared away, and a fresh building up of opinion begin ?

This image is introduced to show that Miranda was one who could not tell which was still firm and which was rotten, so he tried climbing by means of both the rubbish and the towers ; does the figure of "turf and towers" stand as a symbol for the influences affecting Miranda's life, as "Red Cotton Night-cap Country" stands for the action which resulted from these influences ?

In describing the unquestioning, religious side of Miranda's mind, what further information does the poet give about Miranda's church ? Why does he mention Voltaire and Rabelais as symbolic of influences which might affect Miranda's faith ? Does the poet refer to any actual incident or facts of Talleyrand's life in his reference to Prince Vertgalant (line 226) ? What is the appropriateness of the allusion to Sganarelle ?

In lines 266 fol. does the poet represent the spirit of Sganarelle as working within Miranda, and is that spirit one which tempts him to the ways of Vertgalant rather than to the ways of Eldobert ?

Do these rather obscure passages give a foretaste of the manner of man Miranda is ? In lines 331-354 the poet introduces the image of a tent on the turf ; does this give another foretaste as to Miranda's life ?

From line 355, does the style become less discursive, so that the facts of the story succeed each other more rapidly? Is there something in the tone of the style which makes you suspect that Clara de Millefleurs is not telling the truth in her first story? Although the poet says, "Monsieur Léonce Miranda heard too true a tale," he adds, "perhaps I may subjoin too trite."

What do you gather as to the poet's attitude toward Clara in the digression from the story he makes at line 679 fol.?

Although the story now moves forward, all the time, is the style constantly embellished by figurative ways of presenting the facts and remarks upon the moral aspects of the situation? Does the poet seem to insinuate in some of his remarks that living in such a "tent" erected on "turf" was in itself not so bad as Miranda's failing to recognize the permanent elements of good in it, so that he had to quiet his conscience by regarding it as something he would make up for, later on in his life?

In lines 136-189 (Part III.) there is a fine example of the fitting of nature imagery to the mood at the time; are there any other examples of this sort in the poem?

When the poet quotes does he give the impression that he is quoting the exact words of the actors, or rather that he is imagining what they might say?

Does the poet give any direct description of the Cousinry?

What impression does he give of them, and how does he manage it?

What image does he invent for Miranda's new attempt to justify his way of living?



From the digression (lines 713 fol.) does Browning give decided hints as to the sort of advice he thinks Miranda should have had from his friend Milsand?

Incidentally, this is a beautiful tribute to his friend Milsand, is it not?

Do you agree with the poet's conclusions (lines 786-860) that it is useless to try to change the basis of any one's faith, but that the ethical applications to the affairs of daily life may be modified to suit new contingencies? Was this something the advisers he sought did not clearly see?

Does the poet show disapproval of the way the Church treated the matter? Does he give any hint of the way he thinks it should have acted? Would such action as he hints at have been consistent with the way it had acted on other occasions where the circumstances were different? Or would it have agreed with the sort of advice Milsand might have given Miranda? Is Browning, therefore, sarcastic when he says the Church should not have hesitated to say, "Each from the other go, you guilty ones"? (line 931).

In Part IV. the poet explains that it is the poet's province to give a man's thoughts, the newspaper's part to give his words; does he exercise the prerogative of putting Miranda's thoughts into language which would probably not occur to Miranda? Does it none the less reflect truly Miranda's soul?

Does the language he puts in Clara's mouth when she answers the cousins also turn into poetry her thoughts rather than what she may actually have been supposed to say?

In interpreting the souls of these two, does he show his sympathy for them and understanding of them

better than he does when he gives the final criticism of their respective characters ?

Does his doubt of Clara's capacity to love truly, show that even the poet has some prejudices ?

Might she not have been so constituted that she could not see what would be the right action any better than Miranda, whose power of true loving the poet never doubts ?

Do you agree with the suggestion in the Introduction (see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IX.), that Browning is himself in this poem on the side of love ? Or do you think he believes Clara and Miranda ought to have separated ?

Is not Clara right when she says that their love for each other saved them both, and made their lives far better than they would otherwise have been ?

Is it not greater justice to realize that those who have sinned may be regenerated, and that society should give them the chance to live a whole and complete life, rather than doom them either to the continuance of sin or to the mutilation of their best instincts ?

Is lack of will power to make a decision the special sin most objected to by Browning in Miranda ? (Compare "The Statue and the Bust," also Introduction, *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IX.)

What were the political and religious movements of Miranda's day in France as reflected in this poem ?

(See *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, Vol. IX., p. 283, for allusions. For further information see Taine's "Modern Régime," Vol. II., Chap. 4 ; Forbes's "Life of Napoleon III. ;" Legge's "Pius IX. : the Story of his Life.")

In referring to the description of the "meek, hitherto, un-Murrayed bathing place," Professor Walker

says: "The manner in which the poet there introduces himself and his tastes and habits is full of meaning. In a simple picture of nature there would be no place for him; but there is place when the object is to give prominence to the effect of nature upon man, not visually alone, but in his life. . . . His principal object is not to paint nature, but rather to illustrate the pleasures human life derives from nature. For this purpose multiplicity of points of contact, rather than orderliness or artistic arrangement, is important." In this particular case is the poet's object not so much to show the relation of nature to his own enjoyment of it as it is to present the scene setting for the story?

Mr. Symons says of Miranda and Clara: "This man and woman are analyzed with exquisite skill; but they are not in the strict sense inventions, creations: we understand rather than see them. Only towards the end, where the facts leave freer play for the poetic impulse, do they rise into sharp vividness of dramatic life and speech. Nothing in the poem equals in intensity the great soliloquy of Miranda before his strange and suicidal leap, and the speech of Clara to the Cousinry. Here we pass at a bound from chronicling to creation; and however splendid the chronicle, this is a great step." Would this poem have gained by dramatic treatment all through, or would a charm peculiar to itself have been lost in this way? Does the charm consist largely in the way we see the poet's own mind working with the facts and presenting them always in an atmosphere which seems to be compounded of his own sympathies and opinions, and those of society, which he subtly satirizes?

# SINGLE POEM STUDIES: "THE INN ALBUM"

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## I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Dialogue and its Management.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is the stage setting of this poem typically English? What signs of its English quality are noticeable; and are these marked, not merely by familiarity such as belongs to English scene painting by other English poets, but by the keener observation and frequently ironical touch of the cosmopolitan who knows his own country the better for knowing other countries well?

Is the realism of the dialogue too prosaic for a poem? Or is the verse so dexterously blent with lifelike talk that the realism gives the line freshness and "go," while the metre unobtrusively confers upon the dialogue the restraint and compressed vigor that a novel in prose usually lacks?

Is "The Inn Album" a more successful novel in verse than the "Red Cotton Night-cap Country," because it joins the quicker action of the drama with the story-telling quality of the novel, and so strips away discursiveness of all sorts?

Are the descriptive parts of the poem graphic and terse to such a degree that they are virtually little but

stage directions? Is the movement brisk? How much time does it occupy?

Does the setting of the poem show dexterity in managing that all the scenes, except one, shall take place in the Inn parlor, and yet so naturally arranging the exits and entrances that the characters appear *tête-à-tête* successively, so far as is necessary for carrying on the plot of their cross-relationship? How is this effected?

Is the part the Inn Album passively plays all through the dialogue artificial, or a natural incident made use of ingeniously?

How do the various *tête-à-têtes* open up the little plot, and bringing the three main characters into closer and closer contact, take the steps leading to the last intense situation and tragic end? (See digests of the parts of the poem, in Notes, *Camberwell Browning*, as cited.)

Is the second appearance of the girl, outside the closed door, at the end of the poem, where her light gay voice and bantering talk are heard, while she herself remains unseen, a refreshing foil to the grim scene inside, and an original conclusion? Or does it leave the story in too unfinished a state as regards the future of the younger pair?

Is the dialogue especially English, and appropriate to the middle of the nineteenth century?

The opening speech of the nobleman gamester, at the beginning of the poem, alludes to Browning (lines 14-18) in a depreciating way. Is this in questionable taste on the poet's part? Or is it in place, here, among the various references to modern English writers, as a natural contemporaneous hit, and one fairly representative of common criticism upon Brown-

ing as an artist? Does it help to mirror the time, then, and does the irony of the poet upon his critics in bringing forward thus their fun at his expense, outdo them?

Does the reference to Wagner and then to Beethoven at the end of the poem (lines 46-50, and see note thereon, p. 303), similarly reflect a characteristic of the time in moot criticism of Wagner? Or does it in this case, in giving the girl's opinion, imply Browning's also, that Beethoven was "worth fifty such"? How do these compare with other such allusions in the poem as to reflecting public opinion of the time?

Is this poem the more lifelike for being rich in "local color" of this kind, and will this contribute toward its increasing value and interest as a transcript of typical English nineteenth-century life in the future? Or is it likelier to lose interest on this account?

What other æsthetic characteristics contribute to give this dialogue its especial flavor? Is the allusion (Part II., lines 42-75) to the cousin's music at three guineas an hour, and the "semi-grand" piano she has to use while her master has "the table top," and the use made of this as illustrative imagery an appropriate bit of realistic symbolism? And the elm-tree whose beauty so feeds the eye of the elder woman in her talk with the girl (Part III., lines 59-69, 241-251), is this one of many such essentially English objects made use of to bring out character and plot in a way that suits the scene and dialogue?

Which of these realistic figures and allusions are humorous?

Does the speech of the two younger characters in

the dialogue show freshness and inexperience in comparison with that of the older man and woman? How is this effected?

Is the element of surprise in the plot well managed? Is the reader led to divine the relationships existing between the characters, and so to follow readily the thread that is knitting the plot; but later to be carried to the loosing of the knot without guessing how it will be managed? In the talk of the two men, for example, is it clear guessing enough, except to them, that they have loved the same woman, and in the talk of the two women, that the elder one cannot be as happy as the younger one supposes she is? But it is a mystery what the older man is going to do to make the woman obey him, or how she is going to get out of the difficulty, so that on top of her apparent acceptance of the youth the final tragedy comes with the suddenness of fate.

Does "The Inn Album," together with the "Red Cotton Night-cap Country," show, as Mr. James Fotheringham has put it, "a pathological rather than an æsthetic or ethical curiosity and development"? Is it marked by diffuseness, as Mr. Alexander says all Browning's work after 1868 is?

Is "The Inn Album" so concise, vigorous, and unspeculative in the conduct of the dialogue that the common classification of it as belonging with the more discursive works of this period of Browning's writing shows a manifest inaccuracy or a stupid lack of critical discernment?

Is it, in management of plot and directness of dialogue, "more nearly similar in form to the pure drama," as one of Browning's English critics, Mr. Arthur Symonds, has been enough unprejudiced by the



free treatment of a home subject to see, "than any other of all Mr. Browning's poems not cast in the dramatic form" ?

"We have a thread of narrative, but only a thread connecting dramatic situations," says Professor Walker also ; "and comment there is none. The curtain falls before the effect of the last tragic scene is disclosed : it is left to the imagination. . . . And each character has spoken for and interpreted itself."

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Characters.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Does the first speaker give an equivocal impression of quiet reserve that may be strength of character and that may be merely pose ? How early does his bearing begin to awake suspicion ? Is he right in taking the young fellow's friendly proffer to cancel the gaming debt just as he does ? Or is there room here for a little suspicion of so much virtue in a gambler's honor ?

When, after having confided to the youth his real character as it comes out in his account of why he is not a success in life, is one led to believe him to be in earnest in his conviction that in her "life's prize was grasped at, gained, and then let go" ? He has just said he hated his love (Part II., line 107). Which is the pose ? Did he really hate her for ill-starring his future ?

Is the boy contemptible in his readiness to admire brilliant sins and aristocratic looseness ; or likable on account of his freshness and weakness with a man to whom he thinks he owes friendship ?

How much of the glamour of such arrogant self-indulgence as that of the gamester noble is due to his rank and artificial social importance ?

Is the girl in her ardent friendship for the older schoolmate refreshing and natural, and without the stain of weak admiration of the cynical that is a part of the boy's relation with his man friend?

She and the boy are both more talkative and free of fancy than their two friends. Is this lifelike and suitable to the conditions of the case in both of these interviews?

Is the older woman so much of a sphinx that one begins to suspect her too? Or is it soon evident that her nature is self-contained from suffering and not from any lack of frankness? Whenever she does find it requisite to tell anything, does she speak with the utmost directness, and follow it up with words which most unflinchingly impart the main truth?

Does she leave any doubt as to her love of her younger schoolmate? And yet, is it a very warm friendship, which after an unequivocal expression of unhappiness from the one friend is met by the other's obeying her bidding and leaving her at once? Or is it such a shock to the girl, especially with her own marriage pending, that her going is natural? Or is it that the stronger nature of the woman and the sense of her self-controlled suffering awe her, checking her gay volubility, and making her feel that the most delicate sympathy she can show is silence, and doing as she is bidden?

Miss E. D. West, in her paper on "An Aspect of Browning's Villains" (in "Browning Studies" of the London Browning Society, pp. 106-129), considers that there are indications of the unused better self in the hateful elder man of "The Inn Album." "This man has keen intellectual perceptions of moral distinctions; he nowhere calls evil good. He has

subtle discernment of the quality of the earthly blessings he has forfeited. Just herein does the tragedy of his life lie ; in his clear vision of the heaven of noble human love between which and himself a great gulf has, by his own act, been set. His heart has become bound in coils and coils of guileful motives, yet it asserts itself in a direct sincerity for once." This once is when he reverts in the talk with the boy to the love experience which might have been the means to him of gaining success.

"And later on," continues Miss West, "the passionate appeal to the woman from whose love he had shut himself out by his grievous wronging of her, has a strange sort of pathos by reason of its being prompted by complicated impulses of a twofold nature, only one part base. We, the readers, are given insight into the half genuineness of his transient feeling ; while *she*, his former victim, is seen by us as discerning in his entreaty only the latest device of his guile. *She* does not perceive that this appeal made thus to her by the world-hardened man is not wholly the utterance of a mere lustful desire, . . . but is in some measure also the last despairing gasp after a heaven of good, made by a soul as it sinks down into an earthly hell of vileness. She is, in his eyes, a symbol of the better life that he might have attained to, and has missed.

"That he is still capable of thus feeling, — that, even perverted, the desire of self-surrender to a nature which has seemed to him to represent what is 'highest and best and most real' finds even a temporary place in his heart, is an evidence of his being not wholly dead in sin."

Does the "large deliberate look" of the woman

when the man makes this proposition to her gain our trust that it can read this villain more deeply? Is she one of Browning's intuitional characters whose decisions are unerring?

Does he indeed feel her superiority, as Miss West intimates, and the blight his consciousness of his wrong course with her has cast upon his life; but does he feel this as Guido felt Pompilia's moral power, to resent it and strive to overcome it by guile? Is his course naturally the same, — first, by craft to ensnare it; and is his way of doing this suspicious of playing on her womanly vanity as to the influence she retains over him yet? — second, by the less hidden attempt by threat to force her to ruin herself?

Is it likelier that the lady feels his power almost overwhelming her once more, and that in the desperate moral necessity her soul feels to protect herself from him, she steels her heart more violently than considerately against an overture with a good impulse in it, which had she recognized with less scorn she could have encouraged without yielding to it herself?

Is the suggestion to this effect made in the Introduction (*Camberwell Browning*, Vol. X., p. xiii) the most probable?

Was scorn, however, — although it might move him first to do his worst to outwit it, so that he could still be the arch-scorner, — the one token of proven defeat and stupidity on his part which could sting his soul into doubt of the wisdom of the habit of cynical superiority and imperious selfishness at the root of his malevolence?

What signs betray him, and which of these constructions of him in his relations with her do they authorize?

Can the woman be justified for taking the course she did, marrying for labor's sake and without frankness as to her past, even to save herself from worse wreckage? How much allowance must be made for her necessity to take to public work of some absorbing kind at a time — now fifty or more years back — when there was scarcely any career open for a woman's energies, almost none in her position as a clergyman's daughter in England, except as married?

It has been said of "The Inn Album" that "every character is either mean, or weak, or vile." Do you feel, on the contrary, that the girl is charming, pure, and not without proof of the capacity for goodness and wisdom; that the boy, although weak and snobbish in his respect for the devilish nobleman, is loyal, frank, and intelligent in grain; that the woman's only weakness is the depth and lavish generosity of a singularly noble heart, and that her sensibility and intellect are of a high order?

As to the Iago of the piece, is his nature so strong, except for his assumption of privilege to make all others the inferior ministers of his amusement or profit, that he arouses the keenest interest, awakening concern for his squandered powers, at the same time that his course excites our moral hatred and our artistic pleasure?

Is the plot most indebted to him or to his victim? Although he initiates the plot, does she direct its course despite him; and does she hold in her hand all possibility of redeeming him as well as herself, and the ability to make the younger man and woman happy or miserable? Is it just, but hard, that her own deception of her husband should be the means of the man's last wrong to her?

“The parson’s beautiful daughter,” writes Miss West, in the article before cited, “would, without the advent of her seducer, have ‘vegetated on, lily-like,’ through some ordinary lot of life, never attaining to the sorrowful grandeur of soul to which the ruin of her peace raised her. But, in the [character of the worker of evil] as presented to us by Browning, is there not significance beyond the actual part [which he plays]?”

Is the principle of the explanation of the good worked by evil through personality, suggested by Browning here, the spiritual illumining of a dark picture?

Upon this point Miss West again writes : —

“Truly, if Browning maintains his hopeful theory about humanity, nobody can say that he shirks putting it to a very severe test. The adjective ‘shallow’ which so currently affixes itself now to the noun ‘optimism’ is hardly applicable to the theory as held by the thinker who admits thus the obligation to find room in it for the fact that humanity comprises existences so hateful as these [this English nobleman and the Italian nobleman, Guido].

“The question cannot be evaded, and he shows no desire to evade it: ‘Is there in human nature, in these its concrete forms, potentiality of final deliverance from the evil in it, given only time enough for the work?’ To this question his answer is affirmative; expressed, indeed, in no definite formula, but discoverable in and through his art.”

Is the woman’s suicide inevitable artistically? Why does Browning call the threat against her written in the Album a warrant? Does he imply that her poisoning of herself was in a sense not her own deed, and

justifiable in self-defence ? This is a part of the real event on which the story was based. (See Notes, *Camberwell Browning*, as cited, for particulars.)

Did the young man understand fully what she had done when he throttled her persecutor, and was his act justifiable ?

Is her clearing of him from any legal process against him by her last writing in the Album strictly true ? Was it just and right, and essentially true ?

Would the law have taken cognizance of such wrong and remedied it, if she and the younger man had not righted it as they did ?

If it were put upon the stage, what would be the artistic effect of this last scene, wherein the young man, alone, silent, all turmoil over, is hearing the innocent voice of the girl, outside the door, while himself standing between the dead bodies of this man and woman whom each of them had called friend ?



## PORTRAYALS OF NATIONAL LIFE: ENGLISH

### I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Historic Illustrations of Political Life.

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For special studies of "Strafford" and "Avison," see programme, "Single Poem Studies" and "Music and Musicians," and for all these poems, Introductions and Notes, *Camberwell Browning*, as cited above.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is it in the light of an ideal of democratic advance toward such a "federated England," as he speaks of, at the close of "Charles Avison," that Browning has conceived his historic illustrations of English political life?

Does he show in them that political progress has been effected through reaction as well as advance,

but without relaxing the inevitableness of the general tendency toward the development of every unit of humanity, — that is, toward democracy?

Is Browning patriotic without being either insular or imperial?

Is "Strafford" conceived in an impartial spirit, so that the honest impulses of the time are exhibited, animating both sides of the political struggle, between the divine right of kings to govern and the people's right to authorize government? Yet is there any equivocalness as to which issue best embodies progress?

What does he mean in "Charles Avison" (line 390) when he says, "Suppose back, and not forward, transformation goes"?

Is the general sense of stanzas xv. and xvi. to show how politically in English history the transformation from the dominance of royal right to that of human right was effected through the initial forward movement represented by Pym, despite the succeeding backward movements which modified the practical result? Though night succeeds day, as the poet's fancy puts it, "heading, hacking and hanging" of recusants under the Restoration following the success of anti-Royalism, there is no night nor day as to the purpose animating the whole movement, for it is, in essence, one, and goes forward. And though what is practically effected is merely the substitution of royalty by consent for royalty by divine right, still, the reactionary forces against which England marched at Preston Pans and Culloden were quelled in that shape of absolute as opposed to constitutional monarchy, and pushed from the path of England's progress.

"Thus a new right, that of the people, arose in modern society," says Drury, "in opposition to the

absolute right of kings, and humanity entered upon a new stage of its journey. Feudalism had been an advance over Carovingian barbarism. Royalty had been likewise an advance over mediæval feudalism. After having constituted the modern nations, developed commerce and industry, favored the blossoming of the arts and letters, royalty undertook to render its absolute right eternal and demanded of the Catholic Church to aid it in maintaining itself therein. England had the good fortune, thanks to her insular position and to her traditions [and thanks, also, to Pym, says Browning, thanks to his personal ideals, initiative, and energy], to grasp the principle which was destined to be that of the future. To her wisdom she already owes two centuries of tranquillity amid the ruins crumbling around her." (See Grosvenor's *Drury's "General History of the World"* and Green's *"History of the English People."*)

Why does the poet make "Strafford from the block," and "foes" as well as friends (lines 426 and 427) "shout 'Pym, our citizen!'" Does he seem to recognize here that the conservative element is as necessary as the radical for progress; or only that the initiator of a fresh political impetus is clearer-sighted and stronger-willed in accomplishing through struggle with his opponents what all honest citizens desire, however they differ as to method — the progress of their country, and that to him, therefore, the credit is mainly due?

Is Browning, in his "Cavalier Tunes," inconsistent with his elsewhere implied political philosophy, because he enters so sympathetically into the personal point of view of the Cavaliers rallying to the support of the falling house of the Stuarts, and reflects so attractively their bluff and intrepid fidelity?

What is the purport of Browning's picture of the man who "gave England India"? Does it illustrate that the moral courage it takes to decide to pursue one's own life regardless of honor or dishonor, — to be cut off from public advantage and undisturbed by that fact, is a more fundamental test of a man's worth to his country than the physical courage to face risk which gave it an empire?

Is Clive's point of view, when he felt the cold muzzle of the pistol touch his forehead, that not death but an obscure life was to be feared, and such blasting of his ambition for future distinction that suicide would be his only resource?

Is the old man, who recalls the anecdote, right in making it suggest the personal application to his own life that if he had felt less regard for the right and more for wealth and honor, he, in his degree, so far as his ability permitted, would have acted as Clive had in his degree; and that, however he and all the world admire the ruthlessness and cunning of a man endowed with such powers as Clive's, still they admire him very much as they admire a tiger who murders half a village, not for the deed but for the quality the brute shows; and that in the long run not such traits of aggression but spiritual traits of character increase in value and significance?

Should work of the sort Clive did for a nation be privileged, morally, as work for an individual ought not to be? Is there one moral standard for a private citizen and another for the public official or the soldier?

In giving to this real story of Clive (see Notes, *Camberwell Browning* for information), these cross-lights of interpretation as to real courage and real virtue, does the poet indicate the half-corrupt

and at best temporary value to civilization of the policy of aggressive military imperialism instituted by Clive ; and that the real tasks of civilization will have to be taken up on a different plane ultimately ?

What comment on the poem and on Clive's policy does Clive's suicide imply ?

As to the act itself, was it courage ; or fear, as Clive suspects ? Compare this way of meeting death with that of "Prospice." Would just that temper of mind in face of death be possible to a man whose life had been spent in aggression and violence ?

What impression does the poem present of the personality of the "great unhappy hero, Clive," and of the nameless old soldier who was his comrade and one of the underlings at Plassy ?

Vivid passing pictures of other characteristic figures are given, incidentally, in the course of the old man's monologue, in its spirited, by turns chatty and ruminating couplets : the graceless boy who half laughs at his old father's delight in telling the pet anecdote of his famous friend ; the eleven choice military spirits, "Captain This and Major That," who none of them demurred a word, in time of need, in favor of "Sir Counting House ;" and "Cocky" himself, who, cheat as he was, seems to deserve Clive's interposition as the best one of the gamester circle. Are they all effective in bringing into higher relief the nobler figures of Clive and his quiet old comrade poring over old times ? And how do all of the group illustrate English military life ?

Whether "The Lost Leader" be considered with reference to Wordsworth and his "abandonment of liberalism at an unlucky juncture" for "no repaying consequence, that I could ever see" (for Browning's own words about it, turn to *Camberwell Browning*,

Vol. IV., Notes, p. 362), or to any such prominent liberal's defection from the people's party to the reactionary movement, — in either case it illustrates the critical political situation of the middle of the century and the almost desperate rallying, largely in fear of France, to resist the most obviously wise liberating measures, lest freedom should broaden down from precedent to precedent too smoothly and effectually. (See Notes, cited above, as to the Parliamentary bills of the time relating to religious, political, and educational freedom which Wordsworth opposed.)

Does the poem as a whole accord with the love of the progress of liberty implied in the dramatic and more directly historical poems? How does the last part (lines 25 to end) especially agree with the idea expressed in "Avison" of political transformation being effected through going back as well as forward? Is it in agreement with it that the lost leader is bidden never to come back, but to fight on and menace the side that once was his, until strength is given it to master him and his new devotion?

What is "the new knowledge," then? Is it knowledge of the inevitableness of the people's progress, against which energy cannot but assist through eliciting greater energy to accomplish it?

What does "found the one gift of which fortune bereft us" imply? That the honor of the laureateship, the one gift the people could not confer, had been put in the hands of privilege through the curious combination of circumstances which made the revolution in England half abortive, so that political liberty was gained in great measure, but with the retention of monarchy and nobility?

Is it significant of Browning's political sincerity and

of his integrity as a poet, that his "Jubilee Memorial Lines" did not take their color from the blazoning of the window they were written to accompany? (See *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, Vol. XII., p. 383, for description of the window.) Was it due to the generally uninspiring nature of set themes, that he failed to honor the Queen and the Empire more particularly, do you suppose; or because it rightly seemed better to him to give, in a Church, all honor to a higher Power; or because his patriotism was always consistently of a sort that transcended the bounds of temporary institutions, and that held constantly in view further progress towards democratic ideals?

Is the little political *credo*, "Why I am a Liberal," large enough to meet definitely the problems presented by political conditions that have arisen since Browning's death?

How does this confession of faith answer the questions suggested by the Jubilee Memorial lines?

Is it in keeping with the general trend of his treatment of political progress in England in this group of poems?

## II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Phases of Social Life.

	Page		
	Vol.	Text	Note
"Halbert and Hob" (—) . . . . .	xi	124	303
"Ned Bratts" (1672) . . . . .	xi	149	306
"A Blot in the 'Scutcheon'" (early eighteenth century) . . . . .	iii	69	306
"Martin Relph" (middle eighteenth century) .	xi	107	300
"The Inn Album" (1839 <i>circa</i> ) . . . . .	x	132	296
"Donald" (middle nineteenth century) . . .	xi	227	324
"Bishop Blougram's Apology" (late nineteenth century) . . . . .	xi	49	293

Compare "Arcades Ambo," xii., 220, 369.



Consult foregoing programmes on "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon'" and "The Inn Album," "Poems of Adventure and Heroism" for "Donald," and "The Evolution of Religion" and "The Prelate" for "Bishop Blougram's Apology;" for these and the rest of the poems of this group, see, also, Introductions and Notes in *Camberwell Browning*, as here cited.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is Browning's portrait in "Halbert and Hob" of the inner relationship suddenly set up between a father and son, never before joined in any other common feeling that was not physical, a revelation of the way in which national life must always have begun?

Is the situation one that belongs to the beginnings of social life everywhere? Is English life closer to such historic savage beginnings than that of any other European nation? How has Browning given an English coloring to the universal story? For Aristotle's version, see Notes on the poem as cited.

What view of crime intentionally committed against society as a later product of life than uncouth wildness is intimated by the fact that Halbert and Hob were not robbers or active offenders, but merely savage, totally undeveloped either by kindly or malicious associations?

Was the son's heeding of his father's experience, under similar circumstances, and loosing of his hold upon his throat, therefore, a result of heredity acting through the physical nature, or of mental influence bringing an external fact to bear upon his brain and heart, through comprehension, imagination, and sympathy? What does the poet mean by it?

What relation has the idea of God to this climax of a common experience between the father and the son?

Did "God" embody to them in the light of this strange new experience an external fear or mystery?

Is the suggestion to which this poem points, that "a reason out of nature" must turn such hard hearts soft, one which leads to the idea that human righteousness and mercy are only to be derived from an external God, or to the idea that the gradual modification of brutal, merely selfish instincts is due to seeing things from more than one point of view, in short, to social intercourse?

Does this story suggest that scientists are apt to attach too much importance to the investigation of the merely physical side of social influence, and that the field of heredity, in the sense of the transmission of prior life through physical relationship, is too narrow to account for all, even if it were known to account for the larger part of family and racial development?

Where do Ned Bratts and his wife, Tabby, stand in the scale of social development with relation to Halbert and Hob? Are their sins, although of a less savage and more criminal kind, of so rude and roystering a nature that they seem to belong to a primitive period?

Are they and the court scene, upon which the twain burst in with eagerness to be hung and saved, characteristically English; and in what respects is the whole picture true to the general aspect of this historic period — the twelfth year of the Restoration?

Is the portrayal of "the gentles," enjoying the sentencing to whipping, branding, and nose-slitting of "Puritans caught at prayer," based on facts?

Does the presentation of the time to be gathered from the records of the Restoration period (see Pepys's Diary, the dramas of Wycherly and Mrs. Aphra

Behn, Bishop Burnet's "History of my own Times") warrant both the contrast in attitude between the "Quality" and the "Folk," which is exhibited in this poem, and their fundamental kinship in crude feeling?

Is the humor of the poem too farcical? Is it in this respect thoroughly in keeping with the historic quality its broad realism reveals?

What value has the poem as an explanation of the great literary phenomenon of the time, — Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress"?

As an exposition of Bunyan's hold upon the popular instinct and upon the secret of his awakening a rude and strongly animal people through fear toward a less boisterously Pagan life, and a piety characteristic of the English nation, is "Ned Bratts" as artistic as it is convincing?

How is the material managed so as to give the effect of a day and an incident as lurid as Bratts's much-feared hell? The hot season and its effects upon crops, country, cattle, and people strike inward more and more. The stewing court packed with idlers has a still more sweltering sensation when noise is added to the impression, hoots and yells announcing the "brass-bold" pair, "brick-built of beef and beer." Then comes the blurting confession, rounded into the ear with provincial obsolete English, and the momentary hush that follows it is drowned in a strident uproar.

What sort of beauty belongs to the poem? The dramatic beauty of means perfectly adapted to a vital effect?

To pass from "Ned Bratts" to "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon," and to realize that both are constructed

to reveal different phases of English life, probably not much more than half a century apart, is to have a lively appreciation of Browning's artistic versatility and evolutionary method in depicting life. Is the national peace and prosperity belonging to England in the early Georgian period such as to support the settled refinement and studious habits shown in the main characters of "A Blot"?

Is the social morality of this play a fixed quantity, as Mr. Henry Jones finds fault with it for being ("Browning as a Dramatic Poet," *Poet-love*, Vol. VI., pp. 13-28, January, 1894), or is the whole plot founded, on the contrary, on the hollowness of social morality considered as a fixed quantity adding a rigid dignity to a family? Is the sense of irretrievable sin in Mildred, as she at first feels it; and is the "touch of unreality in the character of Tresham," as Mr. Jones complains, the necessary result of an abnormal idea of family "honor"? And is it so depicted in the drama in order to be dissolved and reduced by the tragic climax into something more real and human, — an individualized moral basis?

From a historical point of view is the play morally in advance of the time? Has the nineteenth century yet lived up to it?

The main interest of "Martin Relph" is personal, and it has only the slightest link with history. What traces in the background relate it to the early Georgian era?

Is Martin's confession an honest one, or a sham? Was he really to blame for the girl's death, and does he know it?

Does such a sudden test of a man's good will as came to Relph afford a fair glimpse of a nature's capa-

bility for good, or would only such an opportunity to probe a soul's value be really trustworthy which gave time for a sober second thought? Would a more developed nature respond more quickly to an appeal to its good will than a rudimentary one, like Relph's? Or are all natures alike put to a sore trial when jealousy complicates the question?

Would any representation of English life fail in naturalness, if gaming and sport had no part in them? How are these presented in "The Inn Album" and "Donald"? Does Browning show in these poems and in "Clive" an un-English prejudice against both of these amusements? Or does his personal view find only an implied expression in "Donald" against the common assumption that "sport" brings out a man's courage?

Does Browning's idea of courage in that poem as well as in "Clive" go deeper than mere physical risk?

Is there also in "Donald," as in his bit of verse on vivisection, "Arcades Ambo," a special sense of chivalry in shielding brutes from man's abuse because of their helplessness and inequality with the human being?

Is he right in considering that the deserter and the vivisectionist are equally guilty of cowardice?

In what other respects are "The Inn Album" and "Donald" especially English? For instance, as to allusions, background, characters, and such characteristic episodes as the lady's description in "The Inn Album" of her husband and his parish. Concerning the latter, Professor Walker points out that Browning has there given the most powerful expression to his negative criticism of forms of popular belief that

have played a large part in the life of England. They are closely related to "Ned Bratts," wherein a similar religion of fear is depicted, but at that earlier stage of national life it is a healthier religion, grotesque and crude as it may be, because the sentiments to which it appealed are primitive, and not nineteenth-century survivals, betokening starved and stunted human natures.

"In 'The Inn Album,' the nameless heroine, driven by the wrong that clouds her life to marry an obscure and narrow-minded country clergyman, describes her existence with him. The description is a faithful picture of life from which all interests except the interest of evangelical Christianity have withered away. It is not, and is not meant to be, a picture of the greater and larger-spirited evangelicals; for the larger spirits of all sects and parties invariably overleap their boundaries. But it is true to evangelicalism as seen by a small mind some fifty years ago. The limits of the husband's powers and attainments are carefully defined. He is a drudge — not harmless, for to describe him so would be to do him at once injustice and more than justice. Life, for him, has been constantly narrowing. Any scholarship he ever had is 'gone — dropt or flung behind.' He has had no youth, his 'January joins December.' . . . The influence of an unenlightened theology on a nature small to begin with is easily conceived. . . . Heaven becomes 'a vulgar bribe,' and Hell 'a vulgar threat.' The former he 'left wisely undescribed,' but 'Hell he made explicit' [Part IV., lines 240-415]. . . . There is probably nowhere a more powerful exposure of beliefs which, though inherently absurd, have been gravely taught and widely believed. The

nearest parallel is perhaps the satires of Burns, with their merciless exposure of the extreme forms of Calvinism."

Is the criticism of doubt-sapped religion adorned with culture's fruits, in "Bishop Blougram's Apology," any less penetrating, or the picture any less typical, than this in "The Inn Album" of the parish priest "who in youth perhaps read Dickens"?

Is there any correspondence in the ground of criticism between these two different but equally representative English clergymen? What is that common ground? Is it materialism in both cases, though in the one suppressed all natural exercise, and in the other dominant, polished, and self-satisfied, which case-hardens the spiritual-aspiration and benumbs growth?

What part does the assumption of superiority of class and position have throughout most of this group of Browning's English poems? Is the claim to aristocracy and social rank indirectly treated as a source of moral weakness, or simply represented incidentally?

In "Bishop Blougram," especially, what part does his consciousness of social superiority to Gigadibs and his desire to hold on to his supremacy play in his portrayal?

Is this bishop as representative, so far as his materialism and desire to overtop his fellows are concerned, of the elements of decay and moral weakness in the nineteenth century, as the bishop of St. Praxed's is of the like elements in the Central Renaissance period?

Are materialism and the desire for over-lordship the enemies besetting the progress of human civilization to-day?



III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— English Love of Country.

	Page		
	Vol.	Text	Note
"Home Thoughts from the Sea" (1797-1805)	iv	66	375
"Nationality in Drinks" (1805)	iv	10	364
"Home Thoughts from Abroad" (—)	iv	65	375
"The Englishman in Italy" (1846)	iv	175	388
"De Gustibus" (modern)	iv	63	374

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — England's supremacy over the seas established by Nelson despite the growing power of France under the great Napoleon, and constituting almost the only check to his schemes, and so maintaining England intact, this service rendered in the name of England to all her citizens, is the poet's theme of praise and prayer in "Home-Thoughts from the Sea." In "Nationality in Drinks" Nelson, again, is the hero, any trifling anecdote of whom goes well with the toast to his memory. Are these patriotic tributes to England's sea-power more inspiring, because fuller of human interest, than the love of the land at springtime which finds expression in "Home Thoughts from Abroad"?

Are the unreal fancies suggested by the claret of France and the tokay of Germany compared to the merest incidental recollection of the hero, Nelson, suggested by the beer of England, a patriot's natural way of making his own country the most important even in trifles? But is it fair?

Is its history or its natural aspect the most satisfying element of attraction to the lover of his country? Must the history of his country always disappoint the patriot at some times?

Browning wrote, in "Home Thoughts from Abroad," of the superiority of even England's buttercups over Italy's gaudy melon-flower. Ten years later, in "De Gustibus," he contrasted the lover of English trees and lanes and fleeting girl and boy loves, greatly to their disadvantage beside the speaker's love for an old castle in the Apennines, or an Italian sea-side house to the southward, and a people awake to revolt against the Bourbons, even in the shape of the barefoot girl who brings in melons. Did Browning change in his feeling for England? If so, can you imagine why? Compare with Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Preface to her "Napoleon III. in Italy and Other Poems;" and with England's historical attitude of non-sympathy with republican uprisings in other countries. Or is it only to be supposed that Browning wrote these two poems to express, two different moods?

In "The Englishman in Italy," however, does he again express, beneath all his pleasure in the unwonted beauty of an Italian scene, a deep-seated dissatisfaction with the slowness and hesitancy of England to take a manifestly humane and liberating step by passing the long-agitated Corn laws? If this were so, is he more or less a lover of England?

## PORTRAYALS OF NATIONAL LIFE: ITALIAN

I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— Art in the Renaissance Period.

	Page
	Vol. Text Note
"Sordello" (1184-1280) . . . . .	ii 93 909
"Fra Lippo Lippi" (1412-1496) . . . . .	v 24 287
"Andrea del Sarto" (1486-1531) . . . . .	v 36 289
"Pictor Ignotus" (Florence, 15—) . . . . .	v 22 286
"The Bishop Orders his Tomb" (Rome, 15—) . . . . .	v 45 291
"Old Pictures in Florence" (critical) . . . . .	iv 52 371

For special studies of these poems, see *Camberwell Browning*, Introductions and Notes as referred to above, and programmes "The Poet" and "Art and the Artist."

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — If we take from Burckhardt, Pater, Symonds, Vernon Lee, and such other writers as Michelet, Emile Gebhart, Marc Monnier, who have uncovered the Renaissance stores for us, those traits which they agree upon as characteristic of the period, we shall have as our clues to guide us through the mazes of the subject these main threads: (1) A new political and civic tendency, and therewith a new way of wielding war as an instrument of subtle statecraft — a subordination of brawn to brain; (2) A new passion for culture,

and therewith a revival of antique traditions, a new scientific curiosity for knowledge, a new faculty for art, plastic, pictorial, and poetic ; (3) A new conception of love ; and (4) A new devotion to spiritual ideals. Courthope, who has perhaps the latest word on the subject, says : “ ‘ The Renaissance ’ is a phrase at once misleading and obscure. It seems in itself to mean ‘ new birth.’ But by some writers it is employed to signify a new-born spirit of revolt against the trammels of ecclesiastical authority and tradition, while others use it in a more restricted sense, as indicating a freshly awakened interest in the principles of classical literature, which had been allowed to slumber through the darkness of the Middle Ages. Neither of these definitions, however, can be said to cover all the facts of the case. For on the one hand the pioneers of the movement were the Schoolmen, who were also the most powerful defenders of the authority of the Church ; and on the other, the stream of classical culture, however feeble and shrunken in volume, had never entirely ceased to flow. The Renaissance was in fact a tendency inherent in the condition of things, and it was promoted from different quarters by the independent action of all the greatest minds of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. . . . By some the ideas derived from their new studies were thrown into the logical form natural to them from their scholastic training ; others expressed their emotions in lyrical verse ; and others again, of a more lively or less reflective turn, imitated directly the objects immediately before their eyes. But they all wrote in their native tongues, and accordingly, while the Renaissance allied itself everywhere with the cause of political liberty, it at the same time developed the

separate life of every European nation, by perfecting the structure of each national language."

Does Browning show, in his portrayal of Sordello, that to his mind the supreme force at work in the Renaissance was the awakening of a new political and civic spirit? That its master-motive was what Burckhardt calls the awakening of "the individual in love with his own possibilities," which Vernon Lee speaks of as "the movement for mediæval democratic progress" which Symonds describes as "the persistent effort after liberty of the unconquerable soul of Man," and what we should call to-day the democratic ideal?

As represented in Sordello, did the Renaissance consist in the slavish imitations of classical ideals, or in the absorption of a spirit akin to the ancient spirit which made for social and artistic ideals of a similar nature?

In his manner of artistic expression in literature, what did Sordello do that was afterwards completed by Dante?

In what language had the literature of Italy been written up to that time?

In what way do we find the movement for liberty working in "Fra Lippo Lippi"?

Did the revolt against the authority of the Church which was one of the elements in the Renaissance include a revolt against its authority in moral matters as well as against its authority in intellectual and religious matters?

Does Andrea del Sarto, as Browning has portrayed him, stand for the type of artist that reflects an inspired age simply because he was born in it, while he would have been incapable of inaugurating such an age and is incapable of taking the inspiration farther on-

ward? Does he perfect the *technique* of art until the inner meaning is in danger of being lost?

If his age had been as uninspired as himself, would he have been able to indulge in such pertinent self-criticism?

In "Pictor Ignotus" do you discover any signs of the Renaissance spirit? How is it influenced by the unknown painter's own personality?

Is the Bishop at the opposite extreme from Fra Lippo Lippi in his attitude toward the Church, or is his desire to save in his tomb some of his wealth from the Pope (see *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, Vol. V., p. 293) a sign that he had also revolted from the authority of the Church?

Has the effect of the revival of learning on him been to inspire him with the desire to develop his possibilities?

Is his artistic attitude an undigested conglomerate of the past and the present growing out of an external appreciation of the worth of the past?

Burckhardt writes: "We must insist that it was not the revival of antiquity alone, but its union with the genius of the Italian people which achieved the conquest of the western world." Does Browning in these poems show still more than this; namely, that its effect in influencing the character of individuals differed as their characters differed, and therefore bad influences as well as good influences resulted?

Besides illustrating so clearly the moving forces in the Renaissance, does the poet also give vivid pictures in these poems of the manners of the times?

The poems may be compared with accounts of the manners of the times given by Symonds in his "History of the Renaissance."

Do you agree with Dr. Burton that poetry is a better vehicle for making the life of any time live before us than the dry records of history?

Of "Sordello" Dr. Burton says: "In our quest for Renaissance pictures 'Sordello' often rewards us. The Guelph and Ghibelline feuds and the Lombard League are interwoven with the personal history of the protagonist, and if after a reading of the poem we do not *understand* those far-away and involved internecine quarrels, we *do* have ideas or images of mediæval life — its hot gusts of passion, its political ambitions, its fierce coarse brutalities, its lyric episodes of love, its manifold picturesqueness — such as no mere chronicle could have given us. And this because a poet, saturating himself with contemporaneous documents in the British Museum, and thereafter visiting the scenes he would depict, really was able to reconstruct a long-done piece of human action so that it had body and soul, heat and substance." Again, of "Fra Lippo Lippi" he says: "In dramatic pieces like this and the still greater 'Andrea del Sarto' we are let into the very heart and get the blood beat of the blooming-time of creative painting. If ever a phase of life were done from the inside, as we say, it is here." (See *Poet-lore*, Vol. X., pp. 66-76, No. 1, 1898; "Renaissance Pictures in Browning" by Richard Burton.) "Old Pictures in Florence" is interesting in this connection because in it the poet shows the value of the early painters in the inauguration of new ideals in painting. Was it learning that set these painters off on a new tack, or did they have an inborn instinct toward more natural methods in art?

Browning might have chosen to portray greater



names in art during this period, but may have chosen for several reasons to portray the lesser. For example, would the clash between the great impulse of the time and individuals come out more distinctly when those individuals did not stand as the complete representatives of that time's highest achievements? And would not greater interest attach to those who were in the dawn of a movement, and, though failing themselves, pointed out the way to those who were to come after them? Is this the case with Sordello?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— Learning in the Renaissance Period.

	Page		
	Vol.	Text	Note
"Pietro of Abano" (1249-1315) . . . . .	xi	190	315
"A Grammarian's Funeral" (shortly after the Revival of Learning in Europe) . . . . .	iv	248	394

For hints upon these poems, see *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, as given above.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — In "Pietro of Abano" we have presented to us two characters for study, the learned Pietro and the deceitful Greek. Was it usual at that time for one man to include so many branches of learning as the poet says Pietro did? In these days of the revival of learning, was it usual for the Church to persecute the learned, because they were supposed to have become possessed of magic powers by evil means? This was one of the natural consequences, was it not, of that phase of the movement which revolted against the Church? (For history of the battles science has had to fight, see Draper's "Intellectual Development of Europe")

and Andrew D. White's "The Conflict between Science and Theology.") Was this feeling against the learned shared by the unlettered people who were still under Church guidance? While knowledge in art matters had attained full development, knowledge in science was in its infancy. What were the sciences as then practised, and whence was the knowledge derived? (See books mentioned above.) Browning has represented Pietro to be the magician the people thought him, and which he doubtless thought himself, but might it be questioned whether he thought himself capable of just the kind of miracles the poet represents him as performing?

Were Greeks in the habit of going to Italy at this time, and has Browning any historical foundation for representing a Greek with the sort of character he gives this Greek? Does he not resemble strongly George Eliot's Tito Melema in "Romola"?

Was Plato in especial favor in Italy? (See Draper's "Intellectual Development of Europe" for Cosimo de' Medici's attitude toward Plato.)

Is the Greek's theory of ruling people for their good in harmony or at variance with the ideals of the Renaissance?

What the Greek actually did was to rule them for his own good. Is that a danger which underlies all government based upon such principles? Did Plato (see Notes) require a well-nigh impossibly developed man to make his theory work as it should?

The Grammarian is quite another type of the learned man. He is occupied with learning simply for its own sake. His department of learning not taking him in the direction of magic, would he have been likely to subject himself to the ill-will of either

Church or people? Does he truly represent one phase of learning in this period?

Although his desire has been to become possessed of the utmost knowledge, he realized that his aims could never be attained upon earth, and trusted in a future life to complete the earthly life. Of this poem Dr. Burton writes, in the article before cited: "I know of no lyric of the poet's more representative of his peculiar and virile strength than this, in that it makes vibrant and thoroughly emotional an apparently unpromising theme. In relation to the Renaissance, the revival of learning, the moral is the higher inspiration derived from the new wine of the classics, so that what in later times has cooled down too often to a dry-as-dust study of the husks of knowledge, is shown to be, at the start, a veritable revelling in the delights of the fruit, — the celestial fruit which for its meet enjoyment called for more than a life span, and looked forward, as Hutton has it, to an 'eternal career.' . . . 'A Grammarian's Funeral,' then, is a noble vindication of the possibilities rather than the probabilities of that calling, having its historic interest in the implied high aims in scholarship of the time contrasted with later periods. No one Renaissance characteristic stands out in higher relief than this of learning."

Does the atmosphere of these two poems seem as thoroughly Italian as those before considered?

Would the fact that the first one is narrative instead of dramatic make a difference in its impression of reality?

While scholars like unto the Grammarian existed at that time, does it seem probable that he would have had such a circle of appreciators? or is there some-

thing in the appreciation of him which seems to smack of the broad sympathies of a Browning?

Does the rhythm of this poem seem to suggest the climbing feet of the followers who are carrying the body of their master to the mountain top for burial?

If you feel this, should you say it was due to the halting effect produced by the alternation of short lines with weak endings?

Of these two poems, which has the greater number of allusions reflecting the time in which the scene is laid?

What are the chief characteristics of the art of "Pietro of Abano," and how does it differ from "A Grammarian's Funeral"?

Mr. Symons declares it to be "a fine picture of true grotesque art, full of pungent humour, acuteness, worldly wisdom, and clever phrasing and rhyming. It is written in a capital comic metre of Mr. Browning's construction." The poet gives the metre in the music appended. Singing a note to every word, it gives four stresses to the line, the feet being made up as follows: first foot, four syllables; second, two; third, four; fourth, two. In the second line the feet all have four syllables. The third is the same as the first; the fourth, the same as the second except at the end. Does this sort of rhythm based upon a musical lilt have an effect of greater freedom than the ordinary poetic freedom, or does it seem more constrained? If it seems constrained, is it because the element of quantity is made more prominent than it usually is in English verse?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— Life and Manners in the Renaissance Period.

	Page		
	Vol.	Text	Note
"My Last Duchess" (—) . . . . .	iv	143	384
"The Statue and the Bust" (1587) . . . .	iv	265	396
"Cenciaja" (1599) . . . . .	ix	240	305
"Beatrice Signorini" (middle seventeenth century) . . . . .	xii	229	370
"The Ring and the Book" (1698) . . . .	vi	1	325
"In a Gondola" (—) . . . . .	iv	184	389
"A Toccata of Galuppi's" (1706-1785) . .	iv	48	369

For special study of these poems, see *Camberwell Browning*, Introduction and Notes as given above, and programmes on "Husbands and Wives," "Music and Musicians," and "The Ring and the Book."

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.*—Are the husbands represented in these poems fair types of the Italian husband?

Were murders such as those described in these poems common occurrences during the centuries they cover?

Did the interference of the Church and State in moral matters increase or decrease after the inauguration of the Renaissance? What do these poems show on that head?

Were the methods of the Church and State in punishing delinquents similar to those practised by individual husbands that considered themselves aggrieved in any way?

When did heresies against the Church of Rome first begin to flourish, and how had heretics been treated? Were Molinists subjected to persecution at the time of the scene of "The Ring and the Book"?

Had the Renaissance influence in Italy died out by this time? Had the Church gained control again?

Were the officials of the Church, popes and cardinals, better men morally than they had been in the renowned days of the Renaissance?

What effect did the character of the popes have on persecution? Do you get the impression from "The Ring and the Book" that, although Italy was not so glorious in art and culture, the people were coming into a more individual life than they had enjoyed? Is this true to history?

In how many of these poems do you find reflections of the art spirit of the time, and what relations have the art to the rest of the story?

In "Cenci" we have a picture of the way so-called justice was administered, and the personal reasons that sometimes served as an excuse for the execution of the innocent. Are there hints at the corruption of the highest officials of the Church in any of the other poems, or is this the only one that gives a glimpse of this phase in the life of the time?

"In a Gondola" and "A Toccata" both speak of the decay of Venice. Were the mysterious "three" that the lovers are afraid of in the former a sub-committee of the Council of Ten formed in the latter days of the Venetian Republic, whose duty it was among other things to administer justice upon moral offenders. Or were they probably the brothers and husband of the lady, as suggested in the Notes?

Has the poet pictured here just the sort of episode likely to occur in these dying days of Venice?

What differences in manners and customs do you observe between "The Ring and the Book" and "Sordello"? For example, in the treatment of women, in the relations of Church and State? By the time of Guido was the trial of the criminal a

more assured thing than it had been? Were inquisitorial methods, however, still in vogue?

The several cities in which the scenes of these poems are laid are Ferrara, Florence, Rome, and Venice. What differences were there in the government of these cities, and consequently in their customs? Are these differences indicated in the poems in any way?

Do these poems reflect the social life of the time as vividly as the art poems reflect the art life?

For information upon all these questions, the books upon the Renaissance already cited may be consulted; also Milman's "Latin Christianity," Draper's "Intellectual Development of Europe," first eight chapters in W. R. Thayer's "The Dawn of Italian Independence," Hazlitt's "Florentine Republic," Perren's "History of Florence" trans. by Lynch, Horatio F. Brown's "Historical Sketch of the Republic of Venice."

#### IV. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Phases of Political Life.

	Page		
	Vol.	Text	Note
"Luria" (1406) . . . . .	iii	195	324
"A Soul's Tragedy" (15—) . . . . .	iii	257	332
"King Victor and King Charles" (1730) . . . . .	i	237	327
"Pippa Passes" (1830—) . . . . .	i	177	317
"Italian in England" (18—) . . . . .	iv	170	387
"De Gustibus" (18—) . . . . .	iv	63	374

For special studies of these poems, see *Camberwell Browning*, Introductions and Notes, as given above; also programmes on "Luria," "A Soul's Tragedy," "King Victor and King Charles," "Pippa Passes."

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — How



do the relations of history to the story differ in this group of poems?

What were the conditions of Florence at the time when Luria served it as General? Has Browning truly reflected them? (See Napier's "Florentine History," chap. xxix. in Vol. III.)

Are the suspiciousness and doubleness Florentine characteristics?

Though no such mercenary general as Luria existed, such a character as his is easily imaginable. In creating this character and setting him in this Florentine environment, has the poet combined history and imagination in such a way as to produce a striking dramatic situation? Are such combinations of truth and imagination more legitimate in art than the deliberate changing of historical facts for artistic purposes, as the poet has done in "King Victor and King Charles"?

Has the poet developed Luria upon the foundation of a true Oriental temperament? What sort of people were there among the so-called barbarian Moors, and what had been the nature of the civilization they introduced into Europe? (See Prescott's "Conquest of Granada," and Draper's "Intellectual Development of Europe," chap. xvi.)

Does this play, besides its character-interest, symbolize the marriage of Oriental and Occidental ideals, as the second part of Goethe's "Faust" symbolizes the marriage of Greek and Northern ideals?

Were leaders of revolt as frequent in Italy as Browning makes Ogniben in "A Soul's Tragedy" declare?

Do the histories of any of these leaders of revolt resemble that of Chiappino? Were these revolts

against petty local tyrants? And did the Church frequently settle things by taking them into its own hands?

Might "A Soul's Tragedy" be said to be typical of a historical condition prevailing in Italy at that time, rather than a picture of any actual occurrence? Does the atmosphere in this poem seem to be especially Italian, or is its Italian setting rather external than anything else, the ethical problem being supreme?

What connection is there between the Kings of Sardinia and Italian history? Has Browning drawn King Victor and King Charles better or worse than they appeared in history?

Has he made copious use of historical facts in the creation of the atmosphere of the play? Is the deliberate change in facts that he makes at the end allowable for the artistic purpose of unifying Charles's character, and making it consistent throughout? (For hints on the history, see *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, p. 287 fol.)

In "Pippa Passes" the civilization belongs to our present century, and crimes such as those committed in Asolo are still recorded in our own daily papers. The special atmosphere here comes, however, through local color and the background of historical events indicated through the Austrian police and Luigi. What actual state of things in Italy is reflected through them? (See W. R. Thayer's "The Dawn of Italian Independence" and Cesaresco's "The Liberation of Italy.")

Does the "Italian in England" give a more complete picture of the condition of things in Italy during the struggle for independence than can be gained from "Pippa Passes"? (For history, see *Camber-*

*well Browning*, Notes, Vol. IV., p. 387 fol.; also Histories cited above.)

Is this poem trebly interesting because of the beautiful incident it relates, the fine character drawing of the man, and its reflection of a most interesting period of Italian history?

In "De Gustibus" we have the poet's own feeling in regard to Italy expressed. Though it refers especially to the country, may it be taken as a symbol of the poet's deep interest in the art and life of Italy as reflected in his sympathetic portrayals?

Added to his historical interest, is his living sympathy for the Italian struggle for independence. Though he has not expressed this with the lyrical fervor that Mrs. Browning did (see her poems "Casa Guidi Windows," "First News from Villa Franca," and others of her Italian poems), has he none the less expressed it in his exquisite dramatic sketch of an incident characteristic of the struggle in "The Italian in England"?

## PORTRAYALS OF NATIONAL LIFE : FRENCH

### I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Pictures of Historic Life.

	Page		
	Vol.	Text	Note
"Count Gismond" (twelfth century) . . . . .	iv	145	384
"Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli" (twelfth century) . . . . .	v	91	299
"The Glove" (1540 <i>circa</i> ) . . . . .	iv	162	385
"The Laboratory" (Ancien Régime) . . . . .	iv	19	366
"Hervé Riel" (1692) . . . . .	ix	220	302
"Two Poets of Croisic" (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) . . . . .	x	230	304

For hints on the first four poems of this group, see the programme on "Phases of Romantic Love;" for "Hervé Riel," programme on "Poems of Adventure and Heroism;" for the last poem, also, compare programme on "The Poet;" also Introductions and Notes in *Camberwell Browning*, as cited.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Does "Count Gismond" present a true picture of Provençal life and chivalry?

As a love-story, is the poem representative of the possibilities of the time, or is it purer and simpler than is probable for that period?

Does it properly belong to the dawn of chivalry in France (as is here supposed) or to the later fourteenth century chivalry? Why?

Was the abandonment of all claims of a selfish kind, the devotion and platonic quality of the love Rudel shows, the real flower of chivalry, its characteristic expression?

Are its simplicity and almost childlike strain due to its romantic French quality? How does it compare, for example, with Dante's expression of an equally chivalric love for Beatrice in the "Vita Nuova"? Is it possible to trace the reason for the contrast in the nature of the devotion shown by the two lovers to their differences as individuals merely, or to the differences between them as members of a primitive Frankish and an older Italian stock? (For information upon Rudel as a poet, see Justin H. Smith's "The Troubadours at Home," Vol. II., pp. 303-312; also upon customs in holding such tourneys as the one described in "Count Gismond," see Helen Leah Reed's "Browning's Pictures of Chivalry," *Poet-lore*, Vol. XI., pp. 588-601, No. 4, 1899; also Vernon Lee's "Euphorion," Vol. II., chapter on Mediæval Love; Mills's "History of Chivalry;" Hallam's "Middle Ages," Vol. II., p. 456; Guizot's "History of Civilization," Vol. III., Lecture VII. For original romances of France, "King Arthur and the Table Round," "Tales after the old French of Chrestien of Troyes," by W. W. Newell, and Malory's "Morte d'Arthur.")

In "The Glove" a picture of the decadence of chivalric love tests appears under Francis I., the king who consciously sought to imitate and prolong the old days of chivalry. For this reason it shows all the more strikingly both the natural decay through selfishness of the old impulse to perform feats of valor and take any risk that a knight's lady might assign,

and the rise of a new impulse, opposed to mere courtly imitation of deeds of prowess, but holding to that which was true in it, unselfishness in love. How are these elements of decay under old forms and re-birth in a new spirit illustrated in the knight De Lorge and the Court party on the one side, and the lady, Ronsard, and her nameless, unknighly lover on the other side ?

How do the three poets — Rudel, Marot, and Ronsard — exemplify the national spirit of France with reference to the dawn and passing of chivalry ?

Is the fact of formalism in chivalry due to chivalric ideals becoming the fashion, patronized by the king and codified into customs from which falsity as well as sincerity could win glory ? What comment does the poem supply on this point of court corruption in the degrading relation of the king with his knight, De Lorge, and his wife ?

But how does all this agree with the representations of cyclopædias (Zell's Cyclopædia, for example) and old-fashioned histories on chivalry, which attribute grossness to twelfth century chivalry and refinement to fourteenth century chivalry ? Is Browning's representation truer to life, in its implication that the youth of the chivalric movement, while it must afford examples of grossness, must also afford examples of genuineness, and for the same reason, *i. e.* because it was originally a natural growth, while its successful old age, as an institution of feudal courts, must afford examples of mere formalism and corruption ?

In "The Laboratory" the transfer of the scene to a period in French civilization where agencies of a less muscular kind take the place of love tournaments and tests is noticeable. The potion takes the place of the sword,

the medical skill of the Arabic or Moorish physicians and alchemists disputes influence in European life and love with the brute force of the native Frank. This is an agency, too, that a woman may handle. Does the use by women of poison, especially in France, make "The Laboratory" a characteristic picture of life under the old régime?

What incident of the foreign policy of Louis XIV. resulted in the disaster to the French navy from which Browning's peasant hero Hervé Riel delivered it?

Is the honor France loves to pay her illustrious men of all kinds one that it is well a nation should confer, but that the heroes themselves should be as indifferent of receiving as Hervé Riel was?

Is it the deed of the Breton pilot that Browning honors in this poem or his matter-of-course way of doing it?

Does the incident itself account for the spirited interest the poem excites? Or is it due to the thrilling sense of sympathy with France and desire that she should escape shame, together with the personal interest in the hero's success, which the poet's skill works up, so bringing out the noble human quality in an incident altogether lacking in showiness?

As comment on a fame-loving nation, does "Hervé Riel" as well as "The Two Poets of Croisic" suggest some deep-searching criticism on the inconsistencies and disproportion belonging to public opinion of that which is deserving of honor?

Was public readiness to believe in the significance of the lightning stroke that crumbled the ducal crown the real basis of René Gentilhomme's fame as prophet-poet?

What, in comparison with his fame, was the repu-



tation of Desforbes worth? In deriving his title to honor from the susceptibility of La Roque and Voltaire to feminine glamour, was his own share in his renown less important than René's, since René wrote his one famous poem in the whirl and prepossession of an impression that God had spoken veritably to him?

Does such sincerity have everything or nothing to do with fame? Although it may make a work likelier to be powerful in expression and so abler to impress others, must it of necessity do so, because of its sincerity?

Has cleverly calculated insincerity, on the other hand, such as Desforbes's sister advocated, a great deal to do with fame, as in his case it proved, but nothing to do with worth?

Is it conceivable that, in both cases, or either case, the work might have been fine without any reference to the conditions of sincerity or insincerity under which it made its appeal to the public, and yet in both cases have had no recognizable effect at all upon the world?

Is good work sure not to be lost? If its recognition and fame are dependent upon happy conditions, and upon a public not only aware of the author's work, in the first place, so that it can know what it is, but, moreover, sufficiently in touch with him spiritually to appreciate its high quality, — if all this must be presupposed before a work of original genius can have any chance at fame, is it not much more probable that great work has been produced by genius ahead of its time or at a time when the public was not open to its influence, and so failed to be cherished, than that this conjunction of circumstances has never occurred?

Is it likelier that mediocre work can find its public quicker than good work can?

Is it less likely to stay popular? Or does that depend, also, upon what public evolution is with reference to the work; whether movement at the time is revolutionary and after it reactionary, and how long a period passes before a phase of public development capable of getting into sympathy with that work is attained, and whether, during that time, circumstances may cause the loss of the work altogether? As examples of this possibility, look up the vicissitudes as to the work of the greatest Greek writers, *Æschylus*, *Sophokles*, *Euripides*, *Sappho*, — the first two unquestionably appreciated by their public; the second two, for different reasons, more or less debatably appreciated.

“After the death of *Julian* and *Libanius*, one is tempted to think that nobody was really interested in literature any more; but certain books had long been conventionally established in the schools as ‘classics,’ and these continued to be read in ever-dwindling numbers, till the fall of *Constantinople* and the *Renaissance*. The eccentricities of the tradition would form material for a large volume. As in *Latin* it has zealously preserved *Vergil* and *Avianus* the fabulist, so in *Greek* it has multiplied the MSS. of *Homer* and of *Apollonius* the *Kitian* ‘*On Sprains*.’ As in *Latin* it practically lost *Lucretius* save for the accident of a single MS., and entirely lost *Calvus*, so in *Greek* it came near to losing *Æschylus*, and preserved the most beautiful of the *Homeric* hymns only by inadvertence. In general, it cared for nothing that was not useful in daily life, like treatises on mechanics and medicine,

or else suitable for reading in schools. Such writers as Sappho, Epicharmus, Democritus, Menander, Chrysippus, have left only a few disjointed fragments to show us what precious books were allowed to die through the mere nervelessness of Byzantium. . . . Rome and Alexandria . . . liked order and style; they did not care to copy out the more tumultuous writers. The mystics and ascetics, the more uncompromising philosophers, the ardent democrats and enthusiasts generally, have been for the most part suppressed." (Prof. Gilbert Murray's "History of Ancient Greek Literature," p. 2.)

What has been the fact, historically, as to the public fame of modern writers? For information as to Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, Coleridge, etc., and the relativity of fame in general with reference to "The Two Poets of Croisic," see "The Value of Contemporary Judgment" (*Poet-lore*, Vol. V., pp. 201-209, April, 1893).

If genius runs the risk of being overrun by mediocrity gaining through favorable circumstances such vogue as befell these two poets of Croisic, and of being suppressed altogether by lack of public culture, is an instructed, unbiassed, and sympathetic public opinion a vital need everywhere?

In depicting the precarious conditions for fame in a country so sensitive to honor, and so superior to most other countries in affording opportunities and according praise to excellence, is it to be inferred that Browning considered French enthusiasm for literary or artistic talent was in itself a weakness?

In "French Enthusiasms Satirized in Browning's 'Two Poets of Croisic,'" Dr. H. E. Cushman points out that "during the seventeenth and eighteenth cen-

turies when the two poets of Croisic lived, that ancient *régime* of France was peculiarly adapted to bring into lurid light the enthusiasms of which humanity is capable. The court of Louis XIII. was the beginning, the court of Louis XIV. the maturity, and the court of Louis XV. the ending of the dignified, good-mannered, and most courtly court of European monarchy. The two poets of Croisic lived in a society in which order, suitability, and politeness were the ruling ideas, impersonated by the adults and taught to the children. Never has politeness turned casuistry into its service to such a degree and elaborated its manners for such studied effects. There is no place nor time where we should less expect enthusiasms than the time and society that became enthusiastic over René Gentilhomme and Paul Desforges Maillard. Consequently the enthusiasms stand out the more plainly.

“It was the eighteenth century — when French society was most supremely ordered and the individuals thereof apparently in perfect self-control — that there appeared that age of enthusiasm called the sentimental period, which later, among the common people, had its counterpart in the French Revolution. It was this polite crowd that affected now to admire the country, now to return to nature ; now it was a delight in simplicity. The Queen had a village for herself at the Trianon, where, as some one says, ‘dressed in a frock of white cambric muslin and a gauze neck handkerchief, and with a white straw hat,’ she fished in the lake and saw her cows milked. What, suppose you, did the individual Frenchman or Frenchwoman care about muslin, cows, fish, and simplicity ? Then there arose enthusiasms for village people, for the sentiment of tenderness, for the feeling of natural affection.

Then polite society turned to religions, to considering the soul. It practised trying to be human. These were some of the many enthusiasms of that society of which 'The Two Poets' is a criticism. It was the most polite society in the world, but as a society it was capable of enthusiasm that in extent and intensity have scarcely been equalled.

"The French enthusiasm, as the subject under criticism of Browning in this poem, is a social enthusiasm. A social body is an organic being with less than human traits, caprice, sense of responsibility, etc. The satire involved here is directed at civilization in which such enthusiasms could be very frequent, for such a civilization is a reversion to savagery. Yet such hypnotic enthusiasms are perfectly natural to the French mind because of its tendency to isolate the present moment from its associations." (*Poet-love*, Vol. XI., pp. 382-395, No. 3, 1899.)

As a criticism of French enthusiasm, is the poem a satire upon artistic enthusiasm or upon civilization in general, or merely upon elements that thwart and bias its effectiveness as an instrument in the recognition of artistic worth? Instead of being a hit at the inferiority of French judgment because of its French quality of enthusiasm, or because of its social quality, in comparison with an unenthusiastic, unsocialized appreciation of a work of art, — if there is such a thing, — is the poem, on the contrary, an exposition merely of the imperfect conditions under which fame is attainable, implying, consequently, the lack of an impartial and instructed public opinion? Is the poem, therefore, with reference to its story, a subtle corrective of elements of credulity, as in René's case; of gallantry, as in Paul's case; and of general dependence upon

the authority of critics, as in the case of La Roque's and Voltaire's *prestige* with the public ; all of which are detrimental to the right direction of enthusiasm ?

In "The Two Poets of Croisic," two friends, apparently an elderly poet and a young woman, seated beside a log fire in Brittany, are watching the flaring up and dying out of the colored flames rising from the driftwood, while the poet talks and tells his companion stories. Is this scene-setting of the poem well suited to its subject and significance ?

What relation to the theme have the Prologue and Epilogue ? Is the latter told by the young woman ? How do you gather this ? Is it in response to the man's request ? (See closing lines of "The Two Poets.")

Of the story of the two Croisikese poets, Mr. Arthur Symons writes that the first part as preserved, on account of Voltaire's relation with it, is told pretty literally ; but that "the sequel is somewhat altered. . . . Voltaire's revenge when the cheat was discovered, so far from being prompt and immediate, was treacherously dissimulated, and its accomplishment deferred for more than one long-subsequent occasion. Desforges lived to have the last word, in assisting at the first representation of Piron's 'Métromanie,' in which Voltaire's humiliation . . . is perpetuated for as long as that sprightly and popular comedy shall be remembered."

As to the metrical effects of the poem, the same writer calls attention to the fact that although the poem is written in *ottava rima*, "there is not one double rhyme from beginning to end. It is difficult to see why Mr. Browning, a finer master of grotesque compound rhymes than Byron, should have so carefully

avoided them in a metre which, as in Byron's hands, owes no little of its effect to a clever introduction of such rhymes. The lines (again of set purpose, it is evident) overlap one another without an end-pause, where in Italian it is almost universal, — namely, after the sixth line. The result of the innovation is far from successful: it destroys the flow of the verse and gives it an air of abruptness. Of the liveliness, vivacity, and pungency of the tale no idea can be given by quotation."

It may be taken for granted that the metrical singularities thus noted were intentional. What was the poet's design? — To make the story seem like one told by the fireside, and to give it the abrupt effect of talk?

## II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Glimpses of the Bonapartes.

	Page		
	Vol.	Text	Note
"Incident of the French Camp" (1806)	. .	iv	140 383
"Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau" (1868)	. .	ix	I 275

Compare programme on "Poems of Adventure and Heroism" for more special study of the first of these poems; see also, and for the second poem especially, Introduction and Notes, *Camberwell Browning*, as cited.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Are the traits of both Napoleon I. and Napoleon III., as Browning has brought them out in these two poems, peculiarly characteristic of the two men and of their relations with France?

What elements of national glory are emphasized in the "Incident of the French Camp," and what in "Prince Hohenstiel"?

Are the military setting of the first poem and the



utterly selfless devotion of the youth, significant of the man and the time therein painted? And in the second poem what is told of the different period and the second Bonaparte's place with reference to it, simply by revealing the loneliness of the Emperor, who is imagining his confidences poured forth to a woman's sympathetic ears while he smokes and dreams? Is this difference in the two poems, as pictures in the historic life of France, traceable to the contrasts between the characters of the two rulers and the devotion they could call forth in their people? Or is it due, even more, to the historic conditions as to the relations of France with the rest of Europe and to the anti-heroic national sentiment which had displaced such enthusiasm as the youth of the first poem represents?

Was the war feeling of France after the Revolution, elicited as it was against the coalition of all the kings of Europe to stamp out the life of the young Republic, a healthy national sentiment, only deteriorating slowly under the empire, when its victorious self-assertion took up less and less defensible projects of aggression?

How far should you characterize the quality of the national sentiment as healthy under the second Napoleon, with reference, for example, to the Italian wars referred to in "Prince Hohenstiel," and to the war with Germany, on the threshold of which the Emperor is represented in this poem as hesitating?

Is it a mistake commonly made by historians and by the public to attach importance to the two Bonapartes exclusively as responsible for the distinctive life of France at the epochs when they respectively represented her? Does the atmosphere of these poems indirectly tend to correct this by implying the

relation the successes of the one and the ultimate failure of the other bore to the national sentiment they interpreted?

What important resemblance in uncle and nephew accompanies in these two poems the differences glanced at in the vitality, magnetic quality, and following of the two men? Is it shrewdly designed by the poet that, in the first poem, the musing of Napoleon should be presented as the main trait in the sketch of him there presented, as he stands contemplating the possibility of the failure of all his plans if there is a moment's wavering of the battle line (lines 3-12)? Is the climax realistic that, with the assurance of victory the boy brought him, his plans are represented again to be the main interest, — "The chief's eye flashed; his plans soared up again like fire"?

In the second poem, is the musing of Napoleon III. equally a true characteristic? But under what different circumstances as to only half-expected failure and real disaster in the outcome, is the pose caught by the poet for this second, more finished portrait?

Different ranges of plans for boulevard and theatre building and so on, for alleviation of poverty along with suppression of Fourierism and Proudhonism, are made the subject-matter of the second Emperor's aims. Are these characteristic both of the man and the time?

To what extent is the nephew himself a subject — like the boy of the first poem — of the personal magnetism of the first Napoleon?

Has Browning brought this out effectively and with historical fidelity in "Prince Hohenstiel"? What, for example, in his defence of himself does the Prince mean by the two blots and the line he draws between them instead of making another blot?

“These two blots are a pictorial parable, giving at a stroke the gist of one of the most important of Louis Napoleon’s early pamphlets on the policy of the first Napoleon, ‘Des Idées Napoléoniennes.’ What he really did in that pamphlet was simply to draw the line of connection ‘five inches long and tolerably straight’ between *le principe d’autorité*, the principle of authority, in other words the Empire of my uncle, and *l’organisation démocratique*, the government by universal suffrage, recognizing the will of the people as the source of Bonapartist authority, or to adapt one of his own effective phrases in the proclamation of 1857, the ‘only sovereign I may recognize in France is the People.’ In his own account to his mother of the unsuccessful Strasbourg attempt that sent him to America he gives the dialogue between the Commanding General and himself thus :

“‘What would you have done if you had been successful?’ ‘I would have given France the Empire.’ ‘You would have overturned the Government?’ ‘I would have submitted the Empire to the vote of the People.’

“What he wanted to do theoretically in his pamphlets and vainly in the two abortive little buds of revolution at Strasbourg and Boulogne he held on to and came to do actually later after the many set-backs and vicissitudes the world knows. And as to what meant certain things he did of old which puzzled Europe — why, you’ll find them plain merely in the expansion of this metaphor of the two blots he found ready to his hand and attempted to connect.

“In many a speech he indicates as clearly what his abhorrence of making a third blot meant. In his Message of 1849 to the Legislative Assembly

of the Republic, he said: 'I will not cradle the people in illusions and utopias. My course is definite and shall consist on the one side in boldly taking the initiative in ameliorations . . . and on the other side, in repressing with severity . . . disorderly and anarchical schemes.' In his letter of 1849 to Prince Napoleon-Jérôme he raps his radical cousin's knuckles very sharply to give him distinctly to understand that he will maintain nothing but the most moderate policy. The casual references Brown-ing makes his Prince introduce to Proudhon, Fourier, and Comte serve to remind us not only of the deep-reaching ideas that were mooted at this time in France, but also that the second Emperor carried out his programme against such ideas by depriving Fourier's friend, Comte, of his professorship at the Paris Polytechnic School, and by imprisoning Proudhon twice for uttering those criticisms upon property which the world has not yet done discussing. . . . The one fact in Louis Napoleon's background of life being emulation of Napoleon the Great, and the second, as incontrovertibly present in the social atmosphere of Europe in the seething middle of the nineteenth century, being the uprising people, the course of political achievement adopted by a man capable only of carrying 'incompleteness on a stage' would be to attempt a fusion of the two pre-established facts, attaining rule through democratic means, but permitting no rash radical measures to create a third strange fact to complicate the simple aim of making use of what already is. Therefore the means he had to take were to restrain extremists and idealists (of whom he was one himself once when he was only an aspiring voice of liberty in Italy in 1831, as a young

hothead not having more material interests to consider) and to befriend in material ways the retarded bulk of the people.

“The equable sustainment and unification of all parts of the body politic was his one political doctrine and aim. A simple policy in theory, but in practice as hard a job as an Emperor ever had, and as perilous, since he must hold a foot on two inherently opposite tendencies and hold steady what never stays still. The position of strain required to keep the balance might be understood as passiveness by those who did not see against what obstacles the pose was maintained. So the energy of the Laocoön might seem somnolency to those from whom the coils of the serpent were hidden.” (See “Modern Imperialism as shown in Browning’s ‘Prince Hohenstiel,’ ” *Poet-lore*, January, 1900.)

How are the other exemplifications of his policy brought forward by the Prince illustrated by the historical facts? (See Introduction and Notes in *Camberwell Browning*, as cited, for information; also Drury’s “History of France,” Victor Hugo’s “History of a Crime” and “Napoleon the Less,” also “The Works of Napoleon III.,” and contemporaneous accounts. In reading these make due allowance for partisanship on all sides.)

What does Browning’s picture of the third Bonaparte amount to as criticism? Does it represent a hypocrite; or a man of good intentions and fair ability, without enough originality or force to strike out new methods?

Why does he fail, according to Browning, when he had so long been successful and serviceable? Is it because he was too weak to maintain a position in the

nature of things becoming untenable? Upon this question the article already cited continues:—

“Browning’s criticism of Louis Napoleon’s acts in the second part of the poem is as unexplicit as his interpretation of his character. In explaining what his policy was he has made him imply its inherent weakness and temporary worth. The self-glorification, the self-destroying self-indulgence of the Bonapartist ambition, slumbering at the heart of the humanitarian enthusiasms which genuinely attracted him, growing more and more powerful within him, are more and more disqualifying him from keeping an equable balance between two essentially opposed ideals—the principles of authority and of democratic progress. The spirit of the time, moreover, and the intrigues of his own reactionary court are combining to make it increasingly hard to keep the equipoise, even if he personally were not finding the force to contend with the exigencies of his own policy failing him.”

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*— Pictures of Social Life.

		Page	
	Vol.	Text	Note
“Gold Hair: A Legend of Pornic” . . . . .	v	147	305
“Respectability” (1850, circa) . . . . .	iv	115	405
“Apparent Failure” (1856) . . . . .	v	273	316
“Red Cotton Night-cap Country” (1850–1870)	xi	2	83
“Fifine at the Fair” (1872) . . . . .	ix	68	288

For more special study of “Red Cotton Night-cap Country,” turn to “Single Poem Studies;” of “Fifine” to programme “Portraits of Husbands and Wives;” and of “Gold Hair” to programme of “Folk Poems;” also, for all, and especially the last two poems, to Introductions and Notes in *Camberwell Browning*, as cited.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is there a resemblance between the primitive, almost legendary, life touched upon in "Gold Hair" and the sophisticated nineteenth-century life painted in the "Red Cotton Night-cap Country"? Is the link between them, the modified yet continuous power of the Church in French society to dominate the natural desires of the flesh? Or is it rather the unsuppressible love of life and enjoyment inherent in the race which causes its piety perpetually to contend with its pleasures?

Is the main danger of this accommodation between artistic, life-enjoying instincts and a largely formal religion that it makes a sincere and thoroughly rationalized habit of life difficult?

What reason do the two poems mentioned afford that Browning meant each, in its different way and period of time, to illustrate these influences and characteristics of French life?

The religious moral of the Pornic legend, against the innate wickedness of man's heart, is often taken in earnest. Should it be? And, if so, how does it agree with his more obvious illustration in the nineteenth-century true-story poem of the logical inconsistencies and self-stultifying weakness of Miranda's allegiance to the conventional churchly ideals of sin? Does he acknowledge that his course was evil, while at the same time persisting in it and experiencing the value of a genuine emotion?

Why does Browning treat the hypocrisy and deception of the golden-haired girl of Pornic so lightly in comparison with this doubleness of Miranda, which he seems to expose to view as an intellectually unhealthy condition for moral development? Does the time make the difference?



In "Respectability" a case of more wilful revolt against conventional ideals is presented. Is it equally characteristic of the same general conditions in French social life?

The anomalies and difficulties behind the revolt are not expressed as in the longer poem, but a general justification of the course the pair have taken is implied in the speaker's monologue. Where do they stand with reference to the others as exponents of French social life? Is their position intellectually stronger and morally weaker than that of *Miranda*?

What light does the suggestion that *George Sand* and *Alfred de Musset* are here presented throw upon it?

In the person of *Fifine* and her Gypsy companions the extreme opposition to any recognized conventional ideals, either more or less formal, genuinely religious, or really rational, is presented. The relation of *Elvire* and of *Elvire's* husband to this mode of life is French in stage-setting merely, and in situation is not peculiarly French.

In the local color, impressions of scenes and people, and in picturesque effects that are peculiar to Brittany and Normandy, are *Browning's* French poems especially effective? What passages are particularly pictorial?

In the verses that celebrate the little grewsome building so closely associated with life in Paris, the Morgue, what has *Browning* done to characterize the subject? Does the quality of "Apparent Failure" come out best in the French allusions and associations (for these, see Notes) and in the little descriptive touches that with brief words make the scene inside the building stand out? Is the moral comment expressed in the concluding stanza the main point of the poem? Or

is it rather in the implication of the whole that failure of the most desperate kind, such as is depicted here, is only apparent failure, that the genuineness of soul which has so brought the wretchedest, of their own will, to face death's unknown, proves human worth and dignity?

Why did the poet think, both when he saw the three men "enthroned each on his copper couch," and, later, when thinking it over, that their sin was "atoned" (lines 21-27)? Was he thinking of any kind of atonement, except that which their own exercise of their human desire to conquer the evils of life had wrought?

Is the human daring in the face of death here recognized virtually the same as that which exalts the soul in "Prospice," although it is the reverse unhappy side of the universal experience?

## PORTRAYALS OF NATIONAL LIFE : GERMAN

*Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* —  
Phases of Intellectual and Artistic Development in  
Germany.

		Page	
	Vol.	Text	Note
"Fust and his Friends" (1457) . . . . .	xii	170	356
"Johannes Agricola in Meditation" (1492- 1566) . . . . .	v	20	286
"Paracelsus" (1493-1541) . . . . .	i	35	308
"Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha" (—) . . . . .	iv	133	382
"Abt Vogler" (1749-1814) . . . . .	v	169	308

For special hints on these poems, see Introductions and Notes to *Camberwell Browning*, as given above ; also programmes "Music and Musicians" and "Paracelsus."

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — "Fust and his Friends" is an exceedingly lively dialogue between the inventor of printing and his ignorant friends who imagine him to have made a compact with the devil.

How has Browning combined truth with legend in this poem ? Was the real John Fust ever accused of magic ? There is a story to the effect that he was arrested as a magician in Paris, on account of the exactness of the copies of the Bible which he took there on sale, but the story is said to be untrue.

Was the real Faust accused of being a magician ? "The Legend of Dr. Faustus," Bayard Taylor says, "first took form in the sixteenth century, while the belief in witchcraft and diabolical agencies was still prevalent among the people. The earliest edition of the story, upon which all later variations were based, appeared in 1587. . . . There was an actual Dr. Faust, born in 1490, who studied at the University of Wittenberg, and is said to have been acquainted with Melanchthon. What special reasons there were for making him the hero of a story, cannot be ascertained with any certainty ; but the charge of a compact with evil spirits was frequently made against any man of more than usual knowledge. Even Luther believed in the constant activity of a personal and visible devil, whom he imagined he sometimes beheld. . . . The belief in witchcraft survived among the people long after law and theology had discarded it, and a dramatized version of 'Faust' was one of the favorite plays given in puppet theatres, at fairs, or other popular festivals." (See chapter on Goethe's "Faust" in Bayard Taylor's "Studies in German Literature.")

What was the state of belief in regard to magical agencies at this time ? (See Andrew D. White's "The Warfare of Science with Theology," Vol. I., chaps. xi. and xii., and Draper's "Intellectual Development of Europe," chaps. xiii. and xviii., p. 407 ; "The Philosophical Peculiarities of the Age of Faith.")

Was the Fust of this poem right when he feared his printing would disseminate lies as well as the truth ?

On the whole, does this little poem reflect the atmosphere of the time, while in the person of Fust

it symbolizes the nineteenth-century attitude of what we might call the mystical scientist?

How does Fust's philosophy, written near the end of Browning's life, compare with that of Paracelsus, written near the beginning?

In "Johannes Agricola" has Browning succeeded in making the doctrine of predestination beautiful from an artistic point of view, at the same time that he has exhibited the loathsomeness of such a belief?

Is this effect gained through the fact of the poet's having entered into the devout and trusting spirit of the man? George Willis Cooke (see Notes) says Browning has not exactly represented his standpoint. What were the beliefs of Agricola, and how did he differ from Luther? (See *Encyclopædia Britannica*, articles "Antinomians" and "Agricola.")

In the person of Paracelsus we see reflected the revolt against the thought of that time combined with survivals of a past learning. What was the religious and intellectual state of Germany then existing?

These passages from Draper's "Intellectual Development of Europe" serve to illustrate in part the conditions at that time: "To this denial of papal authority he [Luther] soon added a dissent from the doctrines of purgatory, auricular confession, absolution. It was now that the grand idea which had hitherto silently lain at the bottom of the whole movement emerged into prominence—the right of individual judgment—under the dogma that it is not papal authority which should be the guide of life, but the Bible, and that the Bible is to be interpreted by private judgment. . . . At this moment there was but one course for the Italian court to take with the audacious offender, for this new doctrine . . . was

dangerous to the last extreme. . . . Luther was therefore ordered to recant, and to burn his own works, under penalty, if disobedient, of being excommunicated, and delivered over unto Satan. But Luther was not to be intimidated ; nay, more, he retaliated. He denounced the pope. . . . He called upon all Christian princes to shake off his tyranny. In the presence of a great concourse of applauding spectators, he committed the volumes of the canon law and the bull of excommunication to the flames. . . . The Emperor Charles V. found it necessary to use all his influence to check the spreading Reformation. But it was already too late, for Luther had obtained the firm support of many personages of influence, and his doctrines were finding defenders among some of the ablest men in Europe. . . . While Germany was agitated to her centre, a like revolt against Italian supremacy broke out in Switzerland, . . . and found a leader in Zuinglius.

“Even at this early period the inevitable course of events was beginning to be plainly displayed in sectarian decomposition ; for while the German and Swiss Reformers agreed in their relation toward the papal authority, they differed widely from each other on some important doctrinal points.”

Also these passages from White’s “Warfare of Science with Theology” :—

“The impulse thus given to childish fear and hatred against the investigation of nature was felt for centuries ; more and more chemistry came to be known as one of the ‘seven devilish arts.’ Thus began a long series of demonstrations against magic from the centre of Christendom. In 1437, and again in 1445, Pope Eugene IV. issued bulls ex-

horting inquisitors to be more diligent in searching out and delivering over to punishment magicians and witches who produced bad weather, the result being that persecution received a fearful impulse. But the worst came forty years later still, when in 1484 there came the yet more terrible bull of Pope Innocent VIII. known as *Summis Desiderantes*, which let inquisitors loose upon Germany, with Sprenger at their head, armed with the *Witch Hammer*. . . . Similar bulls were issued in 1504 by Julius II., and in 1523 by Adrian VI.

“The system of repression thus begun lasted for hundreds of years. The Reformation did little to change it, and in Germany, where Catholics and Protestants vied with each other in proving their orthodoxy, it was at its worst. On German soil more than one hundred thousand victims are believed to have been sacrificed to it between the middle of the fifteenth and the middle of the sixteenth centuries. . . .

“Of course, the atmosphere created by this persecution of magicians was deadly to any open beginnings of experimental science. . . .

“Yet, injurious as this all was to the evolution of science, there was developed something in many respects more destructive ; and this was the influence of mystic theology, penetrating, permeating, vitiating, sterilizing nearly every branch of science for hundreds of years. . . .

“In chemistry we have the same theologic tendency to magic, and, as a result, a muddle of science and theology, which from one point of view seems blasphemous and from another idiotic, but which, none the less, sterilized physical investigation for ages. The greatest theologians contributed to the welter of



unreason from which this pseudo-science was developed. . . .

“Strong investigators, like Arnold of Villanova, Raymond Lully, Basil Valentine, Paracelsus, and their compeers, were thus drawn far out of the only paths which led to fruitful truths.” White furthermore speaks of several instances where Paracelsus showed his independence of judgment. For example, he wrote to Zuinglius against the prevailing belief that comets were balls of fire “flung from the right hand of an angry God to warn the grovelling dwellers of earth.” He also “called attention to the reverberation of cannon as explaining the rolling of thunder, but he was confronted by one of his greatest contemporaries. Jean Bodin . . . declared thunder to be ‘a flaming exhalation set in motion by evil spirits, and hurled downward with a great crash and a horrible smell of sulphur.’” Of his service to medicine White says: “In the sixteenth century Paracelsus appears — a great genius, doing much to develop medicine beyond the reach of sacred and scholastic tradition, though still fettered by many superstitions.” Again, “In the beginning of the sixteenth century, cases of ‘possession’ on a large scale began to be brought within the scope of medical research, and the man who led in this evolution of medical science was Paracelsus. He it was who first bade modern Europe think for a moment upon the idea that these diseases are inflicted neither by saints nor demons, and that the ‘dancing possession’ is simply a form of disease, of which the cure may be effected by proper remedies and regimen.”

By what methods has Browning reproduced the atmosphere of the time in the poem?

Whence had the learning of Paracelsus's time been derived? (See Draper, especially Chap. XIII.) Is this also suggested in the poem?

What was the attitude of the real Paracelsus toward Luther?

Do these three poems each show different effects of the Renaissance as it passed into Germany?

"Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha" is so purely imaginary that it cannot be definitely compared with any historical period. Nevertheless, does it not seem to breathe the atmosphere of all the old polyphonic writers who flourished in Germany in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries?

The name of Palestrina is the one definite clew in the poem. What was his place in musical development? (See Symonds's "Italian Renaissance.")

Is there anything in "Abt Vogler" that reflects either a phase of musical or philosophical development in Germany? What place did Vogler hold in German music?

Does the aspiration of the poem well symbolize the dawn of the romantic period in German music which was being inaugurated by Beethoven during Vogler's life? Would it be possible to imagine a greater contrast than that between his inspired extemporizing and the complicated manufacture of the fugue by Hugues? So, may these poems be said to symbolize the beginning of German music in the polyphonic school and its climax in the romantic school?

Though these poems thus stand for phases in musical growth in Germany, is their chief interest in their abstractly musical and moral significance?

In this whole group of poems is the interest more individual and less national than it is in many, if not all, of the Italian group?

Two other poems might be included under Germany, though not under the present topic: First, "The Flight of the Duchess." Although there is nothing to indicate the exact scene where the poem is laid, can you gather from the references in the poem that the scene is Germany, and that it is near the sea? It might be somewhere in the Saxony provinces, as there they have copper and salt.

From the fact that this German Duke brought his ideas for imitating chivalry from Paris, what French king might have been upon the throne?

How are the habits of the Gypsies reflected in this poem? (See Borrow's "Gypsies in Spain," also article on Gypsies in *Encyclopædia Britannica*.)

The second one is "Colombe's Birthday," which in its names is suggestive of France.

How do these French names come to belong to German Duchies?

The incidents in this play have only the faintest resemblance to the history of the succession to Juliers, but is there not some of the atmosphere of the time in the fact of Berthold's succession being assured by Pope and Emperor instead of its being decided upon its merits, as Berthold himself hints (see Act V. line 10)? Also in the wrongs that the city of Cleves suffered?

With these poems, as with the others, the aspects of historical life in them are entirely subordinate to the character interest; yet do they serve as an illustration of the fact that Browning varies the settings in which he puts his characters as much as he does their individuality, and makes them reflect more or less definitely historical epochs?

## PORTRAYALS OF NATIONAL LIFE: SPANISH

*Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* —  
Pictures of Life in Spain.

	Page
	Vol. Text Note
"Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" . . . . .	iv 16 365
"The Confessional" . . . . .	iv 21 366
"A Forgiveness" (middle eighteenth century?) . . . . .	ix 227 303
"How it Strikes a Contemporary" (seventeenth century?) . . . . .	v 3 282

For further study of the three last poems, see programmes "Phases of Romantic Love," "Husbands and Wives," and "The Poet;" for all, see, also, Introductions and Notes in *Camberwell Browning*, as cited.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — "In Spain," Buckle maintains ("History of Civilization," Vol. I., p. 177), "the Church has, from a very early period, possessed more authority, and the clergy have been more influential than in any other country."

The long struggle of Spain against the Arab invasions, being both political and religious, identified the Church with the national life. "During eight centuries," says Buckle again, "this compact between Church and State was a necessity forced upon the Spaniards by the peculiarities of their position; and after the necessity had subsided, it naturally happened

that the association of ideas survived the original danger, and that an impression had been made upon the popular mind which it was hardly possible to efface." (See Chapter I. on "Outlines of the History of the Spanish Intellect," in Vol. II., cited above.)

How do the first two poems of this group illustrate, as peculiarly Spanish, the influence of monastic life?

Part of the instinctive hatred felt by the monk who is watching good Brother Lawrence in the "Soliloquy," and describing him as he waters his "damned flower-pots," trims his bushes, and picks his melons, may have found well-nigh justification for abhorrence of such a fellow in Spanish prejudice against any skilful industry because the "Moriscoes" and "infidels" were good at the same sort of tasks. Does the "Barbary Corsair" allusion (line 31) reveal another Spanish prejudice?

Is imputing the Arian heresy to him, in stanza v., a token of a deep-seated historical Spanish aversion?

"After the subversion of the Roman Empire, the first leading fact in the history of Spain is the settlement of the Visigoths, and the establishment of their opinions. . . . They, as well as the Suevi, who immediately preceded them, were Arians, and Spain, during a hundred and fifty years, became the rallying point of that famous heresy. . . . Clovis . . . regarded by the Church as the champion of the faith, attacked the unbelieving Visigoths. His successors, moved by the same motives, pursued the same policy . . . a war for national independence became a war for national religion . . . late in the sixth century, the Latin clergy converted their Visigothic masters, and the Spanish government, becoming orthodox, naturally

conferred upon its teachers an authority equal to that wielded by the Arian hierarchy."

Why is it that the humor of the poem seems to reach its climax of deliciousness in the desire to curse Brother Lawrence into Manicheism (see *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IV., note 56, p. 366, for information as to this Oriental heresy) through himself making a cheating compact with Satan?

Does the conjuration he begins (line 70) suggest Arabic words? How do they contrast with the interruption of the call to vesper service, and the Latin "Hail Mary" following?

Does the humorousness of this cloister picture detract at all from the force of the situation as a moral comment of an implicit sort on the evils of monastic life?

"There are," says Miss West ("Browning Studies," p. 125), "some of Browning's pictures of evil that explain themselves to us better if accepted as mere studies of this or that attitude of feeling rather than as portraits of character. To seek in these for any traces of good in evil would be not to the point. An instance of this is the highly-finished study of one phase of human hatred — the hatred felt not for any definite injury done, but on account of the groundless antipathy (of which probably most people have had some slight experience), intensified by the compulsory comradeship in the oppressive monotony of the conventual life. I refer of course to the Soliloquy of that Spanish monk who is shown to us as looking on, with a hideous snarl of 'g-r-r-r' at the inoffensive gardening operations of the obnoxious 'Brother Lawrence,' whose melon-flowers of the 'fruit-sort' he had been at the trouble to keep 'close-nipped on the sly.'

"Here we have simply a study of a morbid mental condition, resulting from the unhealthy inactivity of the cloister routine; and as to what the real nature of this very unamiable monk would have been had his energies found legitimate scope in the outer world, Browning does not, of course, undertake to say. Probably, since his cloistered feelings were anything but languid, even in the midst of the sluggishly-peaceful influences surrounding him, there may have been in him a good deal of force of character, which he might have turned to better account under luckier circumstances."

Do you get a clear picture of Brother Lawrence's innocent obtuseness, however, and to the point of half sympathy with the other brother's view of his provokingness?

Are there any indications of date either in this or the following poem?

Is the name of the girl's lover, "Beltran," significant of Gypsy or Moorish blood? Does the poem leave the expulsion of the Moriscos suggestively in its background?

What confirmation of the united interest and action of Church and State, such as this poem of "The Confessional" exemplifies, is afforded by Spanish history?

What types of priest are represented in these two and in the following poem?

Is the cruel refinement of the husband of "A Forgiveness" typical of a Spanish nature polished but not changed by culture?

Is the power of the Church in Spain characteristically exhibited in "The Confessional," or were such instances rare?



How does the picture there presented of priestly power so exerted agree with the picture in "A Forgiveness" of another confession, where the man who is confessing dares to stab his Father Confessor?

Is this probable under the circumstances, for a man of so much brain, power, and rank as the husband in that poem is represented as having?

In what period in the history of Spain are such a character and such an incident of power against a priest likeliest to have appeared?

Does the time of the poem belong to the period of foreign influence, expulsion of the Jesuits, and attacks on the Inquisition peculiar to the reign of Charles III.? Or may it be ascribed better to the nineteenth-century attempts at national regeneration?

The mere existence of a modern yet probably not contemporaneous statesman of so much ability as the man in "A Forgiveness" is represented as having would make him, according to Buckle, almost impossible either during the rule of the Austrian dynasty before the middle eighteenth century, or in the reactionary period of Charles V., which followed.

"Ensenada, the well-known minister of Ferdinand VI., was appalled by the darkness and apathy of the nation, which he tried, but tried in vain to remove. When he was at the head of affairs in the middle of the eighteenth century, he publicly declared that in Spain there was no professorship of public law, or of physics, or of anatomy, or of botany . . . there were no good maps of Spain, and . . . no person who knew how to construct them. All the maps they had came from France and Holland. . . . The only remedy seemed to be foreign aid. . . . Even the fine arts, in which the Spaniards had formerly excelled, partook of the general

degeneracy." (See Buckle, pp. 49 fol. for graphic evidence of the decline of Spain after the expulsion of the Moriscoes in 1609, and the influence of the Church in prostrating intellect and energy.) "Books unless they were books of devotion were deemed utterly useless. . . . Until the eighteenth century Madrid did not possess a single public library. . . . So late as the year 1771, the University of Salamanca publicly refused to allow the discoveries of Newton to be taught, and assigned as a reason that the system of Newton was not so consonant with revealed religion as the system of Aristotle."

What likelihood is there of the Spanish dramatic poet painted in "How it Strikes a Contemporary" belonging to the early period of Spain's literary glory, and that Cervantes, Shakespeare's contemporary, is hinted at?

What evidence is there even then of the national characteristics of the average Spaniard, and how is it shown in the talk of the young Valladolid dandy about this eccentric man, the Corregidor? Are piety and lack of intellectual curiosity and alertness, despite much goodness of nature and a lovable gayety, indicated in the speaker in this poem?

Is the saintly death-scene of the Corregidor in accord with the history of Cervantes? He became a monk a few years before his death. (See Ticknor's "History of Spanish Literature.")

# PORTRAYALS OF NATIONAL LIFE : RUSSIAN

*Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* —  
 A Russian Folk-Story.

	Page		
	Vol.	Text	Note
"Ivàn Ivànovitch" . . . . .	xi	128	304

Compare the little descriptive picture of Russia in "Pauline,"  
 lines 950-954.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Who  
 tells the story? Since it is told by a Russian as an  
 example of a Russian carpenter's characteristic habits,  
 and as a tale told to Russian children, time out of  
 mind, for the sake of the moral, ought it to be  
 expected that it embodies the same sort of moral  
 edification for a modern public, and that the poet's  
 view of the situation is meant to appear in Ivàn's act?  
 Or should it not rather be regarded as a typical folk-  
 tale displaying, along with Russian life and ways of  
 thought, a primitive rather than an absolute moral?

Is Mr. Walker somewhat blinded to the integral  
 artistic and historic aspects of the poem when he con-  
 sidered that the whole piece was devised by Browning  
 for the sake of the moral judgment to which the story  
 leads and of the act in which it was expressed, and  
 "not for the sake of the miserable woman who died  
 by it, nor for the ghastly tale itself"? ("The

Greater Victorian Poets," p. 159.) Is this too much like taking the story as little Russian children are expected to take it, and being so led away by the realism of the poem that the poem itself is ignored?

Is what is said about the tale as one belonging to Russian hearts as they were in Peter's time, before French and German ideals of life had modified Slav instincts, significant? What is the bearing of this on the final situation?

But in adding "I wager 't is as old to you as the story of Adam and Eve," does the poet make the speaker intimate that it is based on fundamental ways of looking at life, elementary views of the relations of men and women doubtless embodied for the poet in the stories of many another race?

Is it significant, also, that the name of the story related in this poem, as known to the Russian, is not "Ivàn Ivànovitch," but "The Judgment of God"? Does the re-titling by Browning have the effect of putting the judgment where it properly belongs, upon the dramatic figure of the carpenter, and upon him as a representative, also, of Russian public opinion? For it is to be considered that this name is an epitome of Russian character, as much as "John Bull" is of English or "Brother Jonathan" of American character. (See note 35, p. 305, *Camberwell Browning*, as cited.)

Is this poem rightly called a dramatic idyl? Why? What does the word "idyl" mean?

Are the pictorial presentations of the group watching Ivàn ply his axe in the cold morning air, the horse and sledge stumbling into the market-place, the bringing to life of the half-frozen woman, etc., any more

or any less successful in their way than the talk of Ivàn and the group, and the dramatic narrative told them by the resuscitated Loùscha.

Is Loùscha a better talker than the rest are, that her story is so much more vivid? Or is this realism of hers due to the poet? But is he not justified in making her tell her story with effectiveness, since she has an experience to relate which must have cut to the quick, and which she instinctively feels must be told vividly if she is to account successfully for her own course in returning alone?

Is it to be understood that Loùscha tells the story a little to her advantage, but that behind her words (lines 135-149) is indication of a frightful choice really being made between the pair of "twin-pigeons"? Did she assist the wolves' choice of Stiòpka, the "undersized slip"? And how about Terenti when his turn comes? What is meant by "No fear, *this time*, your mother flings . . . Flings? I flung? Never! but think! — a woman, after all?" Is this inadvertent confession? Or is it merely acknowledgment of mental hesitation? And, after this, is the representation she makes of herself as falling as she "ought" quite on the babe she guards, and are her questions, "Move hence?" "Could I do more?" as convincing as she would have them?

And yet all through her anguished, nervous story is it not obvious that she knows her life as a woman will seem of very little consequence to that group of bearded peasants, and that she is only hoping desperately for a little pity, a little mercy from the one most affectionate to her personally?

Are her last words upon life and its sweetness (lines 239-248) a self-accusation which challenges her sen-

tence, as Mrs. Orr says? Although they do imply a sense of her weakness, and, instead of helping her, call down upon her the most inflexible judgment, the most summary punishment, do these last words of hers make a piteous appeal to Ivàn's strength and affection to save her, as one who is weak and selfish indeed, and yet used to affection and indulgence, and not unnaturally life-loving?

Is there any reason to suppose, for example, that so far as Martin Relph's failure to be heroic is concerned in the face of the sudden need that tested him (see that poem, *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IV., p. 107; also Introduction, pp. xiv-xvii), he was as guilty as Lou-scha was? Is she judged with less indulgence for her weakness and cowardice because of the sterner sense of the heroic in Ivàn as a man of primitive mould; because she failed repeatedly to take the strong, self-sacrificing course; or because she was a mother?

Could it be urged that Ivàn was right from his point of view, and yet that from a less rudimentary point of view of Society at large no one man has a right to judge and award to another immediate capital punishment?

Is Ivàn more defensible for his judgment from both points of view — his time and personality, as the poet reveals them, being considered — than the present-day critic who would commend the justice of such a punishment in such a case?

Is it likely that the poet so commended it? Is it likelier that he might discriminate between act and man and appreciate Ivàn to the full, while he both pitied Lou-scha and despised her course, entering into each point of view with sympathy? Is the poem itself sufficient proof of this relative point of view?

Does the poet say a word except through the mouths of the characters and of the Russian who tells the story? Does this story-teller give his point of view except in the general way, already referred to, at the opening of his tale in his talk with the poet?

In giving the speeches showing the two ways in which the two judges look upon Ivàn's deed, does the lord represent the more modern view, the priest the traditional view? What do you think of their arguments? Is Loùscha finally condemned by priest and people not as an individual but as a mother, and Ivàn's act therefore adjudged as just on this score?

If Ivàn had been found skulking behind the Sacred Pictures, as the lord surmised, would this have been a presumption that he had done what he considered a doubtful deed? As he was not, may it be assumed that he was justified in his own conscience?

Is the essential test, at bottom of the ethical question here involved, not social but personal, — whether Ivàn and Loùscha felt themselves to be guilty? Ivàn clears himself by this test; does Loùscha?

Is this personal application of their acts the only certain moral touchstone the poem suggests?

“One character we do find . . . which cannot be made to fit in with his creed of universal hope — the mother of ‘Ivàn Ivànovitch.’ She is perhaps Browning's solitary *unredeemable* human being,” writes Miss West, in paper before cited. “There is discernible in her no soul which could be cleansed from guilt by any purgatorial process, — no passion which might be transmuted from force of evil to force of good. To such a creature Ivàn's axe brings simple annihilation; nothing of her survives to be consigned to future reclaiming discipline. Her fault had not been



*moral*, had not been sin, to be punished by pain inflicted on the soul ; it was merely the uncounteracted primary instinct of self-preservation, and as such it is fittest dealt with by the simple depriving her, without further penalty, of the very life which she had secured for herself at so horrible a cost. It is not as if any mother-instinct in her had striven with the self-preserving instinct, and had been overborne by it in a moment of frenzied fear. No ; no revulsion of impulse occurs when she arrives alone at the village ; no wish that *she* had been sacrificed for her children, or that she had shared their fate. In the complacent sense of peace and satisfaction with which she views her own sole and single safety, what hope is there of any regeneration for her, by any conceivable process ? The impression left with us at the last is, that this thing in the semblance of woman is a bit of creation lower in the scale of existence than the brutes, and has no lot or part in the destiny of humanity. We are satisfied to think that the headless body and severed head are all that remain of Louÿscha when the strong-armed carpenter has dealt his righteous blow. And we feel that the dramatist is content thus to leave her."

Do you agree with this ? Is Louÿscha worse than Guido, and the man in "The Inn Album," and does the poem so show her ?

Are the poet's picturesque glimpses of the survivals of communal life and customs among the Russians in accordance with the records ? Compare with Stepniak's "Communal Life in Russia."

Does Ivàn Ivànovitch give evidence of any failure in power, on the part of the poet of sixty-seven, to imagine and portray concretely and picturesquely an incident and a scene peculiar to a crude populace ?

## PORTRAYALS OF NATIONAL LIFE : JEWISH

*Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study. —*  
Jewish Life and Legend.

	Page		
	Vol.	Text	Note
"Saul" (Tenth century B. C.) . . . . .	iv	66	375
"Rabbi Ben Ezra" (twelfth century) . . . . .	v	175	310
"Holy-Cross Day" (early seventeenth century) . . . . .	iv	257	395
"Filippo Baldinucci" (late seventeenth century) . . . . .	ix	250	306
<i>Rabbinical Legends : —</i>			
"Ben Karshook's Wisdom" . . . . .	xii	270	380
"Jochanan Hakkadosh" . . . . .	xi	254	330
"Moses the Meek" . . . . .	xi	284	337
"Solomon and Balkis" . . . . .	xi	236	325
"Doctor —" . . . . .	xi	213	321

For special treatment of the first two poems, the programme on the "Evolution of Religion" should be consulted, and "Phases of Romantic Love" for "Solomon and Balkis." See, also, *Camberwell Browning*, Introductions and Notes, as here cited.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Browning's Jewish poems fall into two groups, one based on historic life, and one on Rabbinical tradition having, it may be, an element of actual life, but, in general, a larger admixture of the unreal and fanciful.

"Saul," already specially considered in a foregoing programme, is widely separated from the other poems

of the historic group, not only in time, but in conditions historic and national, for it celebrates a vital moment in the early history of the ruling dynasty of the prosperous Jewish kingdom, when its first two kings met together, and the promise of a climax of Jewish spiritual influence over the world was made by the poet the subject of young David's song.

How much at odds this spiritual importance of the Jew in the Gentile world came to be with the integrity of Jewish material prosperity, as a nationality, is the fact underlying the remaining poems of this group. Although in "Rabbi Ben Ezra," also, the main interest is rather religious and philosophical than historical (and it is, therefore, more fully treated under the subject of the "Evolution of Religion"), the historic associations of the dispersion of the Jews over the Christian world come out necessarily in the personality of Ibn Ezra, the Spanish Rabbi of the twelfth century, who is the mouthpiece of this poem, and who in "Holy-Cross Day" is mouthpiece, also, of the protest of his persecuted race against those who maintained Christ in word and defied Him in deed. Do both "Saul" and "Rabbi Ben Ezra" deepen in meaning when they are linked together and with the later Jewish poems depicting the contumely and outrage the Jews suffered from the followers of the gentle Jew of Nazareth?

Viewed in relation with the history of his race in its initiation of Christianity and its persecution by Christendom, does the religious philosophy expressed in "Rabbi Ben Ezra" suit the trials and the development through pain and loss of the Jews, as a race, in fulfilment of some higher spiritual purpose of God in which the thinker may have faith, as well as it

suits that to which it is more obviously applied, — the trials and the growing old of the individual ?

May not the Jewish race rejoice, for example, in being allied to that which provides rather than that which partakes, which has effected and not received, holding nearer of the “ God who gives than of His tribes that take ” ? Might it not be the hope of the devout Jew, to-day, who, in the light of the religious evolution of mankind, regarded the contribution his race had rendered to the idea of God, that the resplendent and happy youth and unfortunate obstacle-beset old age of his scattered nation had been alike useful in moulding the cup for the Master’s lips, — a use justifying all pains of the process ? What other correspondences do you find in the historical applications of the poem to the race ?

It has been urged that the poet was wrong in making David approach, in “ Saul,” an idea so abhorrent to Hebraic monotheism as the Incarnation. But although it is evident enough that the Messianic idea was conceived in the shape of “ Power,” as Browning would put it, by Jewish minds in general, is not the historic fact indisputable that in the shape of “ Love ” it found exemplification, for the world in general, in the person of a Jew, and that this existence and doctrine, owed thus to the Jewish race, must have had roots in its past ? Could it not be rationally accounted for, moreover, as an idea, at whatever time any nature, aware that it loves more compassionately than the God it adores, would come to attribute no less power of loving but more to the Creator than the creature, and thence to attribute to Him an effective stooping to the human to save and help ? Is not this the way Browning makes it come to David in the ardor of feeling for Saul,

and in the inspirational mood of his improvisation as poet? Do you find this convincing as a mode of showing the historic evolution of the idea?

It has been claimed by modern Jews, on the other hand, that the desire of Rabbi Ben Ezra (lines 61-72), that flesh might some day help soul as much as soul helps flesh, is thoroughly Hebraic. Is it not an idea closely related in spirit to the idea of the divine indwelling in the body, and the body responding to the finer needs of that indwelling divinity? Is the abhorrent idea of the Incarnation very distant from this admittedly Jewish desire?

It is Ben Ezra's "Song of Death," which the Jews, who are supposed to be sitting in silent meditation over the sermon they have heard, repeat under their breath, in "Holy-Cross Day." Does this expression of the relation of the Jews to the creed which the life of their Christian persecutors contradicts agree with the historic office of the Hebrew to the Gentile idea of God? Is it the same philosophy of the use of evil to educe higher spiritual value, "machinery just meant" to give the "soul its bent," applied here to their nation's watch and ward, till Christ really come, which finds expression in the earlier poem?

Does the contrast between the mockery and guying of the outrageously gruff realistic first part of "Holy-Cross Day" and the exalted lyrical strain of the "Song of Death" mar the unity of the poem, or is it essentially appropriate, and therefore merely an effective change of mood, introducing the theme in a new light?

How are the smoothness and solemnity of the verse which are as characteristic of the last as the explosiveness and roughness are of the first of the poem effected without changing the four-stressed line?

What is meant by the hand "which gutted my purse would throttle my creed"?

A passage in Coryat's "Crudities" relates that the "maine impediment" to the conversion of the Jews living in Italy is that "all their goods are confiscated as soon as they embrace Christianity. . . . Because whereas many of them does raise their fortune by usury . . . it is therefore decreed by the Pope and other free Princes . . . that they shall make a restitution of their ill-gotten goods, and so disclogge their soules and consciences when they are admitted by holy baptism into the bosom of Christ's Church."

Was Ibn Ezra historically and actually one who was capable of enunciating such a view of Judaism as the Song of Death expresses, and such a philosophy of the spiritual uses of misfortunes and physical or external ills of all sorts as the poem "Rabbi Ben Ezra" illuminates?

As to the Jew in Spain, Dr. Draper quotes the Spanish writer Cabanis as saying, "'They were our factors and bankers before we knew how to read; they were also our first physicians.' To this it may be added," continues Draper, "that they were, for centuries together, the only men in Europe who saw the course of human affairs from the most general point of view. . . . These men were infusing strong common sense into the literature of western Europe in ages of concealment and mystification." A presentation of the joint Jewish, Arabic, and Hellenic influence upon the foundation of colleges, upon the initiation of critical and scientific thought, is also given by Draper. (See "Intellectual Development of Europe," pp. 413 foll.) Of Ben Ezra he speaks as a "Jew of Toledo who was one of a distinguished line

of learned Spanish Hebrews, and who was at once a physician, philosopher, mathematician, astronomer, critic, poet." (See also *Camberwell Browning*, Notes, and for persecution as well as status of the Jew in early European history, article "Israel" in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Milman's "History of the Jews," and especially Grætz's "History of the Jews.")

Is Browning's treatment of Jewish persecution and Christian prejudice in "Filippo Baldinucci," markedly characterized by an evolutionary view of the historic conflict between Jew and Christian? And does this exemplification of the insensible yet decided growth of tolerance towards the Jew — from the time of Uncle Filippo, who tells the story, to that of his little boy nephew who has to be told that the Jews must not be pelted — an indication of the design to show historic development in all these poems? Do you find it significant of Browning's point of view that the final part of this poem is one he has imagined, and carries out in this direction the historic development of religious sectarian prejudice?

Is the weakening of the childlike faith belonging to early Christianity, which Baldinucci mourns as exhibited in the decline of zeal against the Jews, accompanied by a more truly religious spirit? Is there some truth in Baldinucci's claim that it denotes latitudinarianism and scepticism? Or is a certain amount of scepticism good, separating the spirit and the letter of Christian doctrine, the essential from the non-essential, and so liberating a view of all sects as embodying partial truth, and encouraging an attitude of mind toward all mankind which is more thoroughly religious?

Is the poet right in intimating in this poem that



this liberalizing tendency of civilization has modified Jewish as well as Christian religious literalism?

Is the implication the poem suggests, that Art has been an important factor in bringing about this mutual toleration, justified by facts?

Why have the Jews, whose accomplishments in learning, science, music, and poesy have been notable, comparatively so little signalized the genius of their race in painting and sculpture?

The Cardinal's reply to the Jew who finds it hard to see why the Christians prize Pagan pictures of Jupiter, is that since they are all lies they are indifferent matters as religious expressions, but that their drawing and coloring are truth. And the Jew, therefore, adopts the same reasoning in regard to pictures of the Madonna. Is this impiety of even-handed application of the Christian view of Pagan art to Christian art as well all that the poem suggests? Is the poet right in making Baldinucci see nothing more in it? But does it not suggest, to the modern reader, the poet's point of view, of which Baldinucci never dreamed although he brings it out indirectly; namely, that Pagan, Christian, and Jewish modes of religious thought are reconcilable through the fundamental spiritual meaning they may all manifest, if viewed with relation to the historic development of the human mind?

Professor Barnet, in "Browning's Jews and Shakespeare's Jew" ("Browning Studies," London Browning Society, p. 265), points out still another side to this explanation of Christian admiration of Pagan art, "besides the sinister one suggested by the Cardinal, and that is, that to the greatest spirits of the Renaissance the traditions of Greek and Roman and Hebrew

were *all* true in a peculiar sense and *all at the same time*." To the Italians the Pagan world was direct ancestor, and they were only in part de-Paganized by Christianity. See, in "The Ring and the Book" (Book XI., lines 1910-2001), what Browning makes Guido say. As Professor Barnet continues, "They half believed in their Ledas and Ganymedes and Jupiters; the lives lived around them, if not their own, showed it. But they also believed in Christ and Calvary, and therefore they were not averse to painting themselves and their contemporaries at the foot of the Cross. Now the Jews could never see things in this light. They were obstinate, undoubtedly, and they had never allowed their definite convictions and traditions to be sapped by imaginative art. Their interpretation of tradition, therefore, was not artistic; it was literal. . . . Moses and Aaron and David were all the more real because the Jews had never seen differing representations of them in art. They had all the realness of abstraction. There is nothing like Art for destroying religions that depend on this or that attitude towards historical facts. Hell cannot be believed in after it has been painted. It is outside the regions of 'fact' that religions are strong."

But if the fine arts in addressing themselves primarily to external presentation of facts to the eye, are an element in the criticism of religious ideas, there is another art, of poetry, which the Jews did profess, which has a tendency to restore the balance from material scepticism to spiritual belief, and which does tend toward an artistic instead of a literal interpretation of tradition. Does this explain the spiritual interpretation of Judaism as reconcilable with Christianity in essence, which the poet David implicitly,

and the philosopher poet Rabbi Ben Ezra explicitly, have been construed by Browning to give in "Saul" and the "Song of Death"?

Mr. Andrew D. White reminds the reader, in his "History of the Warfare of Science with Theology" (p. 300), that it was "the rabbis of Palestine and the Hellenized Jews of Alexandria" who began "the vast theological structure of oracular interpretation applied to the Bible." The disporting of the mind, whether dry, formal, or fanciful to absurdity, or pungent and human, is not lacking in interest to a poet who is interested in all phases of historic development, and the representation among Browning's Jewish poems of such a range of comment, anecdote, and tradition as the Rabbis recorded in the Talmud, is evidence of how synthetic his imaginative glance at national characteristics was.

In "Ben Karshook's Wisdom" a glimpse is given of the ironical insight of a typical Rabbi. Beside the wit of the aphorisms attributed to Karshook, does the little poem convey a notion of the Rabbi's personality? Does the eye that "shoots fire" somehow impart the fact that he saw through the questioner and was indignant at him as a thoroughly materialistic self-loving member of the congregation, who while desirous of saving himself was anxious not to relinquish any sooner than need be his delights in Egypt's flesh-pots? So again, with the second questioner, does the Rabbi's "sneer" suggest that his query was seen to be a result of a dilettante scepticism which was really more doubtful of others having souls than that the inquirer himself lacked one?

"Moses the Meek" is an example of the outrageously fabulizing temper of some of the Rabbinical

legends. Since this one is an invention, and likely to have no precise counterpart in these legends, is it too grotesque and useless a bit of fanciful fun for the poet to have indulged in? Or is it, as an exemplar of that kind of thing in Jewish traditional comment, of value enough, in its way, to occupy the marginal position, as it were, which is given it here in connection with the legendary element in "Jochanan Hakkadosh"?

What is the secret of life according to Jochanan's last experience? Justifiable only in part he finds it, and therefore always disappointing when viewed sectionally from the standpoint of lover, warrior, statesman, and poet. When viewed as a whole whose parts are interlinked and related and mutually necessary to each other with all their qualities of relative good and bad, there is suddenly a sense that there is nothing wrong anywhere. The knowledge that good marred with evil in every partial experience is better in the total scheme, because there more potential for larger future good than the sheer good alone which he has been discontentedly desiring in each field of human effort and finding impossible, now overpowers him with delight, and makes him recognize the ecstasy to be enjoyed from life's gift of consciousness, which enables him to follow and take part in the evolution of the spiritual usefulness of all life's processes.

Is this closely in agreement with Rabbi Ben Ezra's view of the good of life when we have faith to see it whole?

Is Tsaddik's idea of the holy man's secret coming from the abandonment of the flesh and the attainment of a purely spiritual consciousness while still in life ironically meant to be shown as utterly on the wrong tack?

Is it precisely the reconciliation of flesh with spirit, of all sectionalism and division with unity that constitutes the vision of life's secret which floods his last moments in the flesh with rapture?

Is this opposed to the Oriental or Transcendental view of the absolute, and of the unity underlying and embracing human life? Is it a further phase of that philosophy, because the relative and the individual are just as necessary as the absolute and universal, in fact are the means requisite to their realization more and more by each soul for itself?

Browning meant to reveal in this poem, it is said (see Notes, *Camberwell Browning*, as cited), the essentially Jewish philosophy of life to correspond with the essentially Christian philosophy expressed by St. John in "The Death in the Desert." In what does the difference consist? In an especially sensuous instead of an especially idealistic way of regarding human development? And does the agreement consist in the revelation in both of a progressive unity in life, — all phases of experience on the sensuous side of life being regarded by Jochanan Hakkadosh as all phases of belief are regarded by St. John on the idealistic side, as a continuously enlightening process?

"Solomon and Balkis" and "Doctor ——," two sportive renderings of Rabbinical legends, the second the nearest to the wholly farcical (possibly "Ned Bratts" excepted) to which the poet ever came, represent the many anecdotes on the relations of men and women scattered through the Talmudic writings.

Are these characteristic of the Jewish mind also? Is a distrust of women and a disdain of relationship with them shown frequently in the Talmudic and other Jewish writings along with an almost inconsis-

tent recognition of feminine power, and an almost superstitious dread of the relationship as of fundamental power over men?

The ideal quality in the Greek variant of the Alkestis story, "The Just One" (referred to in Notes on "Doctor ——" in *Camberwell Browning*), brings out the strongly sensuous quality, and the bias against women which belongs characteristically to the Jewish way of telling a kindred story. Are the less flattering presentations of the Jewish cast of mind, here intimated on the side affecting women, inconsistent with the presentation of the typically Jewish nature in the other poems?

Is there a taint, if not of Oriental impurity, at least of Oriental contempt of women, in the average or traditional Jewish attitude? Or does Browning's picture of the Hebrew lack counterbalancing anecdotes that might have illustrated a more equal and spiritual relationship?

## PORTRAYALS OF NATIONAL LIFE : ROMAN

*Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study. —*  
Incidents of Roman Life.

	Page		
	Vol.	Text	Note
" "Imperante Augusto natus est — " " . . .	xii	247	375
"Protus" . . . . .	iv	263	396
"Instans Tyrannus" . . . . .	iv	154	384
"Pan and Luna" . . . . .	xi	222	322

See *Camberwell Browning*, as cited.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is the point of this poem, so vividly picturing the terrifying good fortune of the Emperor Augustus, the contrast of the material dominance of Imperialism with that subtler power of the spirit, typified in the birth of Christ? Is such subtler power always bound to supersede the coarser power?

Is the effect of the nameless fear of his own dizzy height above the world, shown by Augustus, enhanced in the poem, by its being reflected through the terror it strikes in one of his subjects?

How is the incident of the Emperor's fear of his own predominance introduced by the Senator who tells the story of his meeting the Emperor disguised as a beggar? Can the poet be convicted of leaving anything of historical importance out that would add to the intellectual as well as the material aggrandizement



of Cæsar? Yet has he compressed all such mention easily and naturally into the talk? How do the records of Augustus's career corroborate all that is here brought out? (See Notes, *Camberwell Browning*; Mommsen's "History of Rome.")

Is this monologue — flashing the daily life of Imperial Rome upon the eye, and shrivelling the sense with the sudden force and significance of the contrast between human power and assurance, and craven human dread cowering before it knows not what — a striking proof of the continuity of poetic gift in the poet of seventy-seven, and one that gainsays the common saying that his later work nowhere shows the objective faculty that marked the early monologues?

Is it like the early monologues, which present typical or historical figures, in style of verse as well as in synthetic condensation and in picturesqueness?

Are the relations of the Latin poets to their patrons implied in the mention here of Varus and Horace true to the "Golden Age" of Augustus?

The military necessities of Imperialism and the vicissitudes they brought in their train are portrayed in "Protus." None of Browning's readers have as yet been able to find its prototype in the history of the Byzantine Empire; can you?

Yet is it none the less essentially true to history, if merely a poetic invention?

Is the presentation of the contrast between Protus, the Prince Imperial, and the rough usurper, John the Pannonian, as derived from looking at two busts, in itself characteristically Roman, capturing the fancy with the reminder of the long rows of emperors' busts "we count by scores" which have come to be associated in every mind with the antique customary

honors paid to dynasties of Roman rulers? Does their number also suggest the possibility of unknown spaces of history where these two busts might easily have remained unremarked till the poet's eye singled them out and investigated their annals?

"The first and last lines, describing two imaginary busts," says Mr. Symons, "are a fine instance of Browning's power of translating sense into sound. Compare the smooth and sweet melody of the opening lines —

‘One loves a baby-face with violets there —  
Violets instead of laurels in the hair, —  
As they were all the little locks could bear :’

with the rasping vigor and strength of sound which point the contrast of the conclusion : —

‘Here ’s John the Smith’s rough-hammered head. Great eye,  
Gross jaw and griped lips do what granite can  
To give you the Crown-grasper. What a man !’ ”

"Instans Tyrannus" is, probably, not only linked with the foregoing Roman poems by the fact that it is based on the suggestion of a line or two from the Augustan poet, Horace, which is its obvious connection with the Latin Empire, but also because it exemplifies the sort of tyranny that often could have been asserted under Roman rule, even if it is not peculiar to the days of Imperial Rome. Is its moral point in close accord with that of the first poem of this group?

Would the circumstances described as belonging to the tyrant and to the man agree with any other relationship than one between an emperor and an insignificant subject? Who else but an Emperor or national ruler of supreme power would have, as this tyrant has, a million or two subjects, the wealth and

seductions to corrupt the soul he hated, the power to injure him through his family or friends, if he had any such ; to suppress him utterly at last ?

Is it eternally true as an exemplification of any national or individual authority exercised to oppress a man or a nation against right and justice, if the oppressed make an appeal to the higher authority of right and justice ?

Does it imply that the triumph of the higher authority over the tyrant necessarily prevents the material evil to the man ? And if this were what is meant, would it be true ? Or does it claim, not that the triumph of right is always maintained on the material basis, but that on the spiritual plane of life it holds, — the man who appeals to justice is not corrupted by the oppression from which he suffers, and the tyrant is himself morally shaken, and so convicted of the existence of a power mightier than his own ?

“Pan and Luna” illustrates the Roman mythology, arising not from its own original conception of cosmic life, but on that of the greater nation it conquered, and whose ideas made a conquest of Rome, — Greece.

How much has the poet changed the myth, in atmosphere and spiritual meaning, from the way Virgil put it originally ?

## PORTRAYALS OF NATIONAL LIFE: GREEK

I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* —  
Greek Myths and Legends as Developed by Browning.

	Page		
	Vol.	Text	Note
"Artemis Prologizes" . . . . .	v	6	282
"Ixion" . . . . .	xi	247	328
"Apollo and the Fates" . . . . .	xii	64	319
"Pheidippides" . . . . .	xi	117	301
"Echetlos" . . . . .	xi	166	311

Hints on these poems may be found in the Notes to the *Camberwell Browning*, as given above, and in the Introduction to Vol. VIII. ; also programme "Poems of Heroism and Adventure."

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — What is the story of Hippolutos as told in the play by Euripides ? (See Vol. I. of the translation from Euripides in Bohn's "Classical Library.") How much of the play has Browning woven into the poem ? Where may the incidents of the revival of Hippolutos and his love for one of the nymphs of Artemis be found ? (See other sources of the myth in Virgil, the *Æneid*, Book VII. ; Ovid, "Metamorphoses," 15 ; Ovid, "Fasti," 6 ; also the play of Seneca on Hippolutos.)

This beautiful fragment is only the prologue of what was intended to be a play. Were such prologues characteristic of the plays of Euripides ?

Is this prologue of Browning's, however, richer than those of Euripides in its presentation of the personality of the speaker, through the weaving into her talk of references to her own habits and the customs which are observed in regard to her? He makes her combine the qualities of Hecate with those of Diana. How does he do this? (For information on the flowers sacred to the gods and customs observed in their worship, see Friends's "Flowers and Flower-lore;" Robinson's "Greek Antiquities.")

Is Asclepius described anywhere in Greek literature as effecting his cures by such practical methods as Browning makes him use? (See the *Iliad*, Book V., for description of Pæon's healing of the wounded Mars. Pæon is the physician of the *Iliad*.)

Does Browning follow the classical representations of Æsculapius? In classical portraiture he is represented with a large beard, holding in his hand a staff round which was wreathed a serpent; his other hand was supported on the head of a serpent. Does the style in this poem seem to remind one of the large calmness of a Greek statue?

In "Ixion" the poet uses a Greek myth, and introduces into it a large symbolical interpretation such as it could not have had in the first place. This poem has been said to be intended principally as an argument against eternal punishment, and the endurance of Ixion has been compared with that of Prometheus. Do the points noted in the remarks following show that such an interpretation does not account for all the implications in the poem? "But why, it might very well be asked, did Browning, if he intended to make another Prometheus, choose Ixion for his theme? And the answer is evident, because in the story of Ixion he

found some quality different from any which existed in the story of Prometheus, and which was especially suited to the end he had in view.

“The kernel of the myth of Prometheus as developed by Æschylus is proud, unflinching suffering of punishment, inflicted, not by a god justly angry for sin against himself, but by a god sternly mindful of his own prerogatives, whose only right is might, and jealous of any interference in behalf of the race which he detested, — the race of man. Thus Prometheus stands out as a hero in Greek mythology, a mediator between man and the blind anger of a god of unconditional power; and Prometheus, with an equally blind belief in fate, accepts while he defies the punishment inflicted by Zeus. He tacitly acknowledges the right of Zeus to punish him, since he confesses his deeds to be sins, but nevertheless, he would do exactly the same thing over again.

‘ By my choice, my choice  
I freely sinned — I will confess my sin —  
And helping mortals found mine own despair.’

“On the other hand, Ixion never appears in classic lore as a hero. He has been called the ‘Cain’ of Greece, because he was the first, as Pindar says, ‘to introduce to mortal men the murder of kin not unaccompanied by cunning.’ Zeus appears, however, to have shown more leniency to him for the crime of killing his father-in-law than he ever did to Prometheus, as he not only purified him from the murder, but invited him to a seat among the gods. But to quote Pindar again, ‘he found his prosperity too great to bear, when with infatuate mind he became enamoured of Hera. . . . Thus his conceit drove him to an act of enormous folly, but the man soon

suffered his deserts and received an exquisite torture.' Ixion, then, in direct contrast to Prometheus, stands forth an embodiment of the most detestable of sins, perpetrated simply for personal ends. To depict such a man as this in an attitude of defiance, and yet to justify his defiance, is a far more difficult problem than to justify the already admired heroism of Prometheus." (See Editorial article in *Poet-lore*, Vol. V., p. 626, December, 1893.)

The first point Ixion makes in his defence is that sin is an aberration of sense; that it comes through the ignorance of the soul whose "rush upon the real" is clogged by sense. Does this thought have any parallel in Greek thought?

In Plato's Dialogues there are many hints to the effect that virtue results from knowledge. For example, in the "Protagoras" Socrates says: "Then, I said, if the pleasant is the good, nobody does anything under the idea or conviction that some other thing would be better and is also attainable, when he might do the better. And this inferiority of a man to himself is merely ignorance, as the superiority of a man to himself is wisdom . . . and is not ignorance the having a false opinion and being deceived about important matters? . . ."

"Then, I said, no man voluntarily pursues evil, or that which he thinks to be evil."

But in the parable of the den in the seventh book of the "Republic" this idea is presented very clearly. (See Jowett's translation of the "Dialogues of Plato," Vol. II.) The abstract of the parable as given by Jowett is as follows:—

"Imagine human beings living in a sort of underground den, which has a mouth wide open towards



the light, and behind them a breastwork such as marionette players might use for a screen ; and there is a way beyond the breastwork along which passengers are moving, holding in their hands various works of art, and among them images of men and animals, wood and stone, and some of the passers are talking and others silent. . . . They are ourselves, and they see nothing but the shadows which the fire throws on the wall of the cave ; to these they give names, and if we add an echo which returns from the wall, the voices of the passengers will seem to proceed from the shadows. Suppose now that you suddenly turn them round and make them look with pain and grief to themselves at the real images ; will they believe them to be real ? Will not their eyes be dazzled, and will they not try to get away from the fire to something which they can behold without blinking ? And suppose further, that they are dragged up a steep and rugged ascent into the presence of the sun himself, will not their eyes be darkened with the excess of light ? Some time will pass before they get the habit of perceiving at all ; and at first they will be able to perceive only shadows and reflections in the water ; then they will recognize the moon and the stars and will at length behold the sun in his own proper place as he is. Last of all they will conclude : this is he who gives us the year and the seasons, and is the author of all that we see. How will they rejoice in passing from the darkness to light ! How worthless to them will seem the honors and glories of the den out of which they came."

The remarks of Socrates in interpreting the allegory are especially pertinent to Ixion's contention. "The prison is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the

sun, the ascent and vision of the things above you may truly regard as the upward progress of the soul into the intellectual world. . . .

“But if this is true, then certain professors of education must be mistaken in saying that they can put a knowledge into the soul which was not there before, like giving eyes to the blind. . . . Whereas our argument shows that the power is already in the soul; and that as the eye cannot turn from darkness to light without the whole body, so too, when the eye of the soul is turned round, the whole soul must be turned from the world of generation into that of being, and become able to endure the sight of being, and of the brightest and best of being — that is to say, of the good,” illustrating further with the attitude of a clever rogue, “But what if there had been a circumcision of such natures in the days of their youth; and they had been severed from the leaden weights, as I may call them, with which they are born into this world, which hang on to sensual pleasures, such as those of eating and drinking, and drag them down and turn the vision of their souls about the things which are below — if, I say, they had been released from them and turned round to the truth, the very same faculty in these very same persons would have seen the other as keenly as they now see that on which their eye is fixed.”

Is the idea that Zeus is responsible for evil to be found in Plato, or does he insist that God is the author of good only?

Is Ixion right when he contends that, knowledge of the good being gained, to keep on punishing the wrongdoer serves no purpose but that of hate?

Ixion presents what he considers would be a better

way to treat sinners. Does this mean that his conception of God is higher than his belief about God?

Now, as to the nature of the sin, Browning makes it distinctly to be arrogance, following the Latin version of the myth. In Lucian's dialogue between Hera and Zeus, the stress is laid upon the arrogance of Ixion. Jupiter declares that Ixion shall pay the "penalty not of his love — for that surely is not so dreadful a crime — but of his loud boasting."

Does the poet mean to imply by emphasizing this point that Ixion's sin was his attempt, in becoming the friend of Zeus and the lover of Hera, to ape divine power and love, and through the failure which attended him symbolized in his being hurled into Hell — that is through realizing that he could not be more than suffering, struggling man, he also realized that Zeus was only man's conception of God? (See lines 91-92.)

But though Zeus is thus dethroned, is all lost? Through the struggles and the sufferings and the bafflements of the flesh a rainbow of hope is formed by means of which he descries far beyond Zeus a reality of ineffable purity toward which he will ever strive.

At that point in the poem where Ixion realizes that his conception of God is higher than his belief about God, and therefore the God he has worshipped has been only a figment of the imagination, he becomes a nineteenth-century philosopher, who perceives that though the basis of any particular religious doctrine be swept away, the eternal essence of religion still remains, and toward the absolute Good man must always strive while recognizing, as Ixion in his arrogance did not, that man cannot know the whole nature

of God. Does this change from Greek thought to modern thought spoil the artistic unity of the poem?

Upon this point Mr. Nettleship remarks: "By a transition wholly unaccounted for by the artistic basis of the poem, the king Ixion proceeds to express ideas such as could not possibly enter the mind of a man believing in the fact, however unjust, of man's being punished by Gods whose notions of right and wrong could only be formulated by the word tyranny. In fact, Ixion on his wheel, after the process as stated above, proceeds to prophesy. He retains the image of the wheel with its rainbow, and states his case in effect thus: 'I am now suffering the eternal pains which my God Zeus has unjustly awarded me for an act of mere folly: and therefore I say that Zeus is not a real God, only a hollow phantasm created by man's imagination and which must one day fall and vanish.' That of course is a *reductio ad absurdum* as coming from a man who believes himself to be actually suffering eternal torment of his body made immortal for the purpose of torment as an unjust punishment inflicted on him by a God who he believed was real enough when actually dooming him." Would this inconsistency vanish if the whole poem is taken as a symbol of the development of the human race through the different phases of religious conceptions?

This poem has a curious rhythm which suggests the turning of the wheel. The lines have six stresses, and every second line has two stressed syllables together in the middle of the line. Is the effect of the wheel added to by the fact that the poem is not divided by stanzas and has very few periods?

In "Apollo and the Fates" Browning imagines the scene which took place between them when Apollo

asked the extension of the life of Admetus, but it is to be observed that he has made this scene symbolize a philosophy which belongs to the nineteenth century. What is that philosophy as interpreted in the Notes to the *Camberwell Browning*?

Is there anything to justify Browning's making the Bacchus cult stand for the birth of love and aspiration in mankind? "The root idea in the Bacchus myth seems to have been stirred by a sense of the potentiality of life in the teeming earth, thence by the divinity of Zeus was the fiery fluid attar distilled to become a joyous god stinging his votaries to a delirium of delight. Mr. Walter Pater makes a similar explanation. It was the lightning of Heaven upon the dew, liberating a liquid joy and persuading to a divine ecstasy." (See Editorial, *Poet-lore*, Vol. IX., p. 455. An idea of the worship of Bacchus may be gained from "The Bacchæ," by Euripides, Bohn's Edition, Vol. I.)

This poem has sometimes been objected to as being incoherent and unpleasant on account of the incident of Apollo's making the Fates drunk.

Might it be answered to these objections, first, that the incident is founded upon an actual myth, and second, that the poem has a sort of concentrated strength and savage largeness which suits well with the idea of nature personifications as understood by primitive mankind, and which is still visible enough in the culture-mythology of Greece and may be seen in the "Bacchæ" of Euripides, therefore all unpleasantness connected with the intoxication of the Fates is removed if we regard it as a symbol representing the awakening of blind law through feeling?

The rhythm in this poem as in the last one is very

interesting. The normal line has four beats. How is the placing of the short syllables varied? Do these variations, together with the concentration of style, give the poem its rugged, almost uncouth effect?

In "Pheidippides" and "Echetlos" we have legends of the battle of Marathon. As the stories may be found in Herodotus, we may make a direct comparison with the Greek source. How much and in what ways has the poet enlarged upon the accounts given in Herodotus? Does Herodotus give any hint that the Spartans did not wish to help the Athenians, and made their superstition about the moon an excuse?

Upon this point Smith says in his "History of Greece": "As soon as the news of the fall of Eretria reached Athens, the courier Pheidippides was sent to Sparta to solicit assistance. Such was his extraordinary speed of foot, that he performed this journey of one hundred and fifty miles in forty-eight hours. The Spartans promised their aid; but their superstition rendered their promise ineffectual, since it wanted a few days to the full moon, and it was contrary to their religious customs to commence a march during this interval. The reason given by the Spartans for their delay does not appear to have been a pretext; and this instance is only one among many of that blind attachment to ancient forms which characterize this people throughout the whole period of their history."

In treating Sparta's action the way he has, did the poet gain a point which could be used to great artistic effect in the poem?

Is it well to take such liberties with history for the sake of art? Might it be argued that although the Spartans were sincere in the reasons they gave, a fiery

youth who had run one hundred and forty miles and who knew the extent of the danger and whose religion was different, might suspect their sincerity, and so Browning represented Pheidippides's opinion?

Looking back over this group of poems founded on Greek subjects, we see that each one treats the subject-matter somewhat differently. In "Artemis Prologizes" the myth is taken just as it stands from classical sources, but the relation of it is put into the mouth of the goddess, and what enlargement there is is in the portrayal of the goddess's personality; but this enlargement is confined strictly within classical limits. In "Ixion" also, the letter of the myth is adhered to, but Ixion is developed into a philosopher combining both Greek and modern elements, and thus he becomes a type of humanity. In "Apollo and the Fates" out of a mere hint is developed a whole dramatic scene along lines which make of it an allegory of the workings of the universal forces of life. In "Pheidippides" the legend serves as little more than the background for the development of the characters of Pheidippides and Pan, while in "Echelos" there is nothing but the simple relation of the story, with a little local color added and a moral at the end, in the style of the morals attached to fables. Owing to these various treatments do we get, in some of these poems, pictures of Greek ideals, and in others the relations of Greek ideals to modern ideals?

## II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Greek Literary Life.

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"Balaustion's Adventure"	. . . . .	viii	1	285
"Aristophanes' Apology"	. . . . .	viii	90	299



For special studies of these poems, see the Introduction and Notes to *Camberwell Browning*, as given above.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — From the introductory lines of this poem to line 357, what is to be learned of the present scene, of the adventure Balaustion has had, of her own personality, of the state of opinion in Athens and outside of Athens in regard to Euripides? How much of this is based upon history, and how much of it is due to the imagination of the poet? (See Notes to *Camberwell Browning*. An excellent account of the life and work of Euripides may be found in G. Murray's "Ancient Greek Literature." See also Jebb's "Classical Greek Poetry;" Perry's "History of Greek Literature.")

Does Balaustion have a premonition of what modern acting is when she uses the expressions referring to the way the actors looked when they spoke and so horrified the whipper-snapper critic of the day, who could not of course imagine acting without a mask? (See lines 304-316.)

Is her explanation of the relation of the arts being so close that one always brings up another a true one? Might this depend upon the imaginative power of the recipient of the artistic impression as well as upon the artist's power of representing things vividly?

The setting of the subject thus being presented, the main business of the poem begins, which is a translation of the "Alkestis" of Euripides, with appreciative and interpretative comment by Balaustion. The translation may be compared with the literal translation given in the Bohn Edition of Euripides, and also with Arthur S. Way's in "Euripides in English Verse."

Do Balaustion's descriptions of the action of the play

add materially to the vividness with which it comes before the reader, so that he feels himself actually in the place of an ancient Greek looking at the play ?

Does it seem to you that Death did not heed what Apollo said, and that Apollo was prophesying to himself rather than addressing Death, as Balaustion says ?

Is Balaustion's conclusion that Alkestis now saw everything in its right relation, and was no longer deceived by the protestations of Admetos justified by the fact that she now no longer addressed any remarks to her husband, but spoke to her children ?

Does Balaustion make a good criticism when she says Admetos "muttered now this, now that ineptitude" ?

Does the speech Alkestis afterwards addresses to Admetos show still more clearly that she is not very much impressed with the nobleness of her husband, or his realization of the greatness of the sacrifice she is making ?

Does Balaustion penetrate to the weakness of Admetos's nature in the criticism following his protestations that he will not marry again ?

Do you agree with Balaustion that Admetos began to realize the full significance of what had happened as soon as his wife was dead ?

Does Balaustion succeed in representing the fine dramatic effect of the entrance of Herakles with all his outside health and freshness upon this scene of woe, all the more dismal because of its revelation of the selfishness of Admetos ?

Do you think that Balaustion in her appreciation of Herakles has really penetrated the purpose of Euripides in portraying him as he did ?

Is she right in supposing that Herakles was not told of the death of Alkestis because they all felt ashamed to

tell him the story of their own selfishness, or was it a point of honor with the Greeks that a guest should be entertained without regard to private sorrows? Hospitality was one of the cherished ideals of Greece. But, in this instance, might not Euripides have meant to give just the impression which Balaustion gets, for he was largely a revolter against Greek religious and social ideals? Besides, is it not shown, later on in the play, that Herakles was astonished that he had not been told? Furthermore, whether Balaustion really took the meaning of Euripides or not, is it not an interesting and perfectly possible interpretation of the action of Admetos and the household when Herakles appeared?

Is Alkestis right again when she says Admetos saw in his father a reflection of himself, and so hated him all the more for his refusal to die for his son?

Did the friends interpose, as Balaustion thinks, because they realized "love's champion here had left an undefended point or two the antagonist might profit by"?

Are her comparisons between the characters of the two men as they appear in this painful wrangle just?

Do you feel, as Balaustion did, that Admetos was beginning to see his own action in a less selfish light when his father left?

Does Balaustion make a good defence of Herakles against the criticism of the old servant with whom Charopé seemed to sympathize?

Is it also a penetrating observation of hers that when Admetos begins to realize the truth he grows like his wife and speaks quietly instead of wailing about his misfortune?

In the version proposed by Balaustion, does she hit upon the only way in which it would be possible for

Alkestis to make the sacrifice, and not only preserve the honor of her husband but show him to be as unselfish and noble as she ?

Does the version proposed by Balaustion strike you as being an especially appropriate one for a young girl to have invented ; and if so, why ? (See Introduction to *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. VIII., for remarks upon this subject.)

Does this exquisitely pure and ideal version of the story agree with the fact of her valiant defence of Herakles in his cups ? (For remarks upon this, see also Introduction.)

Professor R. G. Moulton, in a paper before the London Browning Society, criticised the interpretation of the "Alkestis" made by Balaustion in this poem, as a "Beautiful Misrepresentation of the Original." His arguments briefly are that "Admetos is not to be considered as an individual, but rather as the representative of the state, and, as such, was the dispenser of the glorious hospitality which was a religion with the Greeks ; and that since the Greek ideal demanded the sacrifice of the individual to the state, it never entered the head of Admetos or of any one else that he should not be saved at any cost. He concludes therefore that not only Admetos is not selfish, but, on the contrary, he is as eminent for unselfishness in his sphere of life as Alkestis proves in her own. He says : —

"If Admetos is in fact selfish, how comes it that no personage in the whole play catches this idea? — no one, that is, except Pheres, whose words go for nothing, since he never discovers this selfishness of Admetos until he is impelled to fasten on another the accusation which has been hurled at himself. Except

Pheres, all regard Admetos as the sublime type of generosity. Apollo, as representing the gods, uses the unexpected word 'holy' to describe the demeanour with which his mortal protector cherished him during the trouble that drove him to earth in human shape. The Chorus, who, it is well known, represent in a Greek play public opinion, and are a channel by which the author insinuates the lesson of the story, at one point of the action cannot restrain their admiration, and devote an ode to the lofty character of their king. And Herakles, so grandly represented by Browning himself as the unselfish toiler for others, feels at one moment that he has been outdone in generosity by Admetos. There can be no question, then, what Euripides thought about the character of Admetos. And will the objector seriously contend that Euripides has, without intending it, presented a character which must in fact be pronounced selfish? The suggestion that the poet who created Alkestis did not know selfishness when he saw it, seems to me an improbability far greater than the improbability that Browning and the English readers should go wrong."

Why should the positive opinion of Pheres that Admetos was selfish be dismissed as of no account while the silence of the chorus should be taken as an indication that Euripides did not consider Admetos selfish? Again, if Admetos stands for the glory of the state, how does it happen that no hint of this is given in the play? And if hospitality was such an understood duty, why did the old servant grow so indignant at the entertaining of Herakles, and why did Herakles consider that Admetos had done such a praiseworthy thing in hiding his grief from him and entertaining him?

Commenting on Professor Moulton's view, an Editorial in *Poet-lore* (Vol. III., p. 41) says: "Such an ideal certainly argues not merely unselfishness but altruism on the part of the individual, but what does it argue on the part of the state or the representative of the state? Surely, not only selfishness but pure egoism. That few people, even in Greek times, had reached this altruistic height is shown by the fact that, of all the friends and relatives of Admetos, his wife alone was willing to make the sacrifice. From the remarks of the chorus and Admetos we should conclude that, like most of the Greeks, they thought the practical working of the ideal should be relegated to the old men and women. It is easy to believe in self-sacrifice for the glory of the state when some one else is to make it. But, naturally, the one upon whom this duty is thrust, being of the same selfish nature as the other members of the state, objects to performing it, and retaliates, as Pheres does, by tracing back the selfishness to its true fountain-head, in the state, otherwise Admetos, who, according to Professor Moulton, equals the state. And so Alkestis becomes the sole representative of the altruistic side of the Greek ideal, while Admetos, whether considered as individual or as state, represents the egoistic side, and Pheres grasps more nearly the balance between the two, akin to our modern notions. To plead for Admetos on the ground that he represented the state is merely to shift the ground of the inquiry, for, in either case, the true ground of inquiry is 'Was he conscious of a higher ideal than that of the subordination of the individual to the state, or did he, in ignorance of a higher ideal, fulfil the best that was in him?'"

Balaustion makes his consciousness gradually awaken



to the fact that Alkestis is happier in making the sacrifice than he is in retaining his life, and so he realizes the selfishness he had shown in the first place? Does the play seem to you to fit this interpretation or not?

There is one thing to be remembered: the story was fixed when Euripides took it for his subject, so that the events must remain as they are. Then it depended upon the poet to develop the characters according to his own ideals.

Dr. Philip S. Moxom makes a good argument against Professor Moulton's view in a paper in the published volume of "Boston Browning Society Papers" (also in *Poet-love*, Vol. VIII., pp. 425-432), the conclusions of which are that "Alkestis dies for Admetos, not as the head of the state, but as her husband and the father and natural protector of her children, rather than live, a widow, without him, or form a new union. It is not even for love of Admetos that she dies; for while she shows a high sense of wifely duty, there is no trace of any passionate fondness for her weak and selfish husband . . . she recognizes her doom as the decree of the Fates, and accepts it; yet, in accepting it, protests her freedom to have chosen otherwise."

Professor Moulton finally sums up his position as follows:—

"And this brings me to what I consider the real motive of the play, the conception which underlies the whole, and welds the separate parts into a unity. Euripides is the great anticipator of the modern world in the world of antiquity; he catches the ideals of the ages to come without losing the ideals of his own times. In this play he is painting a conflict, not between two characters—the selfish Admetos and the devoted



Alcestis — but between two ideals: the ancient ideal of public splendour, and the modern ideal of domestic love. An apprentice in the art of poetry could strike the rough contrast between the devoted wife and the gross husband; the great master is attracted by a more subtle problem — to make each party worthy of the other, and let the contest be between the different sides of life represented by each. Euripides is following here his favourite bent: he is taking a thread of modern realism, and insinuating it into the midst of the tragic grandeur which is the natural field of his art. At the opening of the play we see nothing but the sacred splendour of life which is embodied in the Apollo of the prologue, and which has been saved to the world, though by the sad sacrifice of Alcestis. The queen herself is an ardent votary of the cause for which she is to die, and treats the day of her fate as a festal occasion. But there comes a point when this unbroken dignity of mien begins to give way under the pressure of the human feeling suppressed. The human feeling spreads from Alcestis to the servant who tells the tale, and she catches the doubt whether their lord will not have lost as much as he has gained by the vicarious death. The cloud of doubt spreads to the Chorus; Admetos is possessed by it; the prominence of the human feeling in contrast with the safety of the cause is for ever growing; the scene with Pheres, however unjust to the character of Admetos, assists the story by throwing the two sides of the situation into sharp conflict; until, in the final speech of Admetos, the cloud of domestic sorrow has blotted out all the splendour of sacred hospitality, and love is supreme. Then comes the deliverance, and the discord is harmonised in the glimpse of earthly love and sacred

splendour once more united, while behind towers the genial god-man who has worked it all. The play finds its unity, not in the selfishness of Admetos and his repentance, but in the ideal of family affection gradually enthroning itself side by side with the grandeur of public life."

In these remarks does he not partially stultify his own ground of criticism and suggest an interpretation in harmony, if not identical, with that of Balaustion?

Dr. Moxon seemed to feel this, for he says, "In his later statement, as to a conflict between two ideals constituting the 'real motive of the play,' there is some truth, but it entirely defeats his contention that Browning has misrepresented Euripides." He goes on to say, "May not 'the real motive of the play' have been deeper still? May not Euripides, not denying, but implicitly recognizing the common ideals both of devotion to the State and of hospitality, really have sought to set forth the very thought which Browning has so finely developed, namely, the contrast between the selfishness of Admetos and the self-sacrifice of Alkestis, and the regeneration of Admetos's character by the discipline of the tragic experience through which he passed, leading him to self-knowledge, repentance, and the attainment of a nobler spirit?"

In the opening of "Aristophanes' Apology," what historical incident does Balaustion dwell upon in her talk with her husband? What effect has it had upon their actions and upon Balaustion's spirits? What is the mood which leads her to tell of her second adventure with Aristophanes? How much of an idea do you get of the literary life of Athens and the relations between Aristophanes and Euripides before she tells actually of her adventure? How does

Euthukles appear ? Does it seem inartistic for Balaustion to recite to Euthukles the part he had taken in defending Euripides ? Is this accounted for by the fact that Balaustion says, "I somehow speak to unseen auditors. Not *you*, but — Euthukles had entered," etc. ? (Line 242.)

Is her description of the entrance of Aristophanes upon their peaceful privacy both graphic and sarcastic, so that the keynote of her attitude toward Aristophanes is struck ? Is it quite evident that in spite of her disapproval of Aristophanes his personality makes upon her an impression of his power ? Do we see the exalted personality of Balaustion through the effect her mere presence has, first on Aristophanes, then on the chorus ? Does his change of mood in the midst of his eulogy upon drink arise from his memory of the "something" that "happened" ? (Line 741.) In welcoming him does Balaustion speak altogether sincerely, or does she rather address what she thinks he might be than what she thinks he really is ?

In Aristophanes' reply to her welcome do we see glimpses of two or three characteristics of the man : in his admiration of Balaustion's manner rather than of her matter, indicating his susceptibility to beauty ; in what he would like to do with Comedy, showing his vanity ; in the fact that he does nothing, showing his lack of will toward any real reform ? Does Balaustion's question as to whether he has changed his methods of attacking vice imply a reprimand, or is she asking for information ?

In giving his reasons why he wrote the plays which Euthukles did not like, what moods, showing his character, does he pass through ? In objecting to the methods of Euripides, does he mingle a sneer at the

man? Does he also show that, besides being fond of his own coarser methods, he especially enjoys receiving the applause of the multitude? Does he show that his self-love is wounded when he is stigmatized as "wine-lees-poet"? And that his success is not quite as complete as he would like, since laws are made against Comedy by the Archons, and the writers of Comedy are stinted in their allowance from the government for the costumes of the chorus? But is he specially aggrieved at the fact that Euripides takes no notice of the hits Aristophanes makes at him?

Does it appear that Aristophanes wrote the "Grasshoppers" in deference to those who found fault with him? This play is lost, but does Browning make Aristophanes describe it in a manner that reflects his characteristics? He declares that Ameipsias took the prize away from him. (This he did upon two occasions, but the plays were "The Clouds," which was beaten by the "Connus" of Ameipsias, and "The Birds," beaten by "The Revellers.")

Does the account Aristophanes gives of the refurbished "Thesmophoriazousai" agree with the play as we have it? It was acted twice in slightly different versions, which would justify the poet's giving a version different from the one extant. (See the Plays of Aristophanes, translated in Bohn Edition.)

Has not Browning produced a fine dramatic effect in making Sophokles announce to Aristophanes and his revellers at the feast that he will mourn Euripides by having his chorus appear next month clothed in black and ungarlanded? Plumptre, in his Biographical Notice of Sophokles, speaks of this tradition which, in spite of some uncertainty, is "too interesting and too honorable to be passed over." The news of the

death of Euripides having come to Athens, "Sophokles, then, in extreme old age, a few months before his death, was bringing out a tragedy. In honor of the memory of his great rival, in token of his forgetting all feelings of jealous emulation, if he had ever known them, he appeared on the stage at the head of a chorus, clad in mourning apparel, and without the wreaths which the members of a choral company usually wore on their entrance and laid on the altar."

Is the scene following the appearance of Sophokles thoroughly natural in its portrayal of the gossiping, unkind remarks about Sophokles and Euripides? Does the poet in this scene bring in very cleverly actual traditions in regard to Sophokles? (See Notes, *Camberwell Browning*, lines 1234-1257.)

Do the grounds upon which the youthful Strattis praises the "Good Genius" in Comedy reflect the opinions previously expressed by Aristophanes?

Is there anything in the attitude of Aristophanes toward Euripides upon which his sudden defence of him could be based? Professor Murray calls attention to the fact that Aristophanes curiously enough imitates "Euripides to a noteworthy extent — so much so that Cratinus invented a word, 'Euripid-aristophanize,' to describe the style of the two; and, secondly, he must, to judge from his parodies, have read and re-read Euripides till he knew him practically by heart."

Aristophanes attributes his own sentiment to his state of half-intoxication, but how do the company take it? And how does the weakness of character shown by Aristophanes come out in the way he "repaired things," as he says? (Line 1465.)

What effect does his discovery of the portrait, the musical instrument, and the manuscript of Euripides

have on him, and how does Balaustion warn Aristophanes that she will suffer no desecration of the memory of her idol?

Does he reach the lowest depth of smallness and vindictiveness when he wishes the dead who have criticised him and at whom he has slung his shafts of ill humor, could see how things will be a few years hence when his greatness is proved? And when he declares he had always taken care himself to pulverize the brood while they were alive, though this has its drawback, for those he blackens become immortal through his prowess?

Does Balaustion, in the sarcasm of her reply to this, show what an unreasonable stand Aristophanes takes against Euripides, since they are both working for the same reforms?

Does Aristophanes directly answer her objections to his methods of reform, or does he in the long passage following (lines 1761-2709), simply restate his position at greater length?

His first point is that Tragedy holds itself aloof from the world (1764-1770); his second, that Comedy is coeval with the birth of freedom. How does he proceed to show this? (Lines 1783-1838.) Does the sketch he gives of the rise of Comedy agree with the historical accounts of its rise? (See Murray's "Ancient Greek Literature," Chapter IX., "The Drama.")

How does Aristophanes say he improved on this ancient comedy, and how is his description of his work borne out by his own plays? (See especially "The Knights" for Cleon, "Acharnians" for Lamachos, "The Clouds" for Sokrates).

In referring to the difficulties thrown in his way by



the Archons, he describes a reformed comedy, such as he pretends Balaustion and Euthukles would like? Does he in this description show himself incapable of appreciating a true reform? Does the "Plutos," which is Aristophanes' attempt at Middle Comedy, answer in any way this description? (See Bohn's Edition.)

The third point he makes is against the idealism of Euripides, in favor of his own realism. (Lines 1949-1974.) Was Euripides actually a realist, though of a different order from Aristophanes? Arthur S. Way, in the Preface to Vol. II. of his translation of Euripides, thus sums up his characteristics: "More perhaps than any other ancient writer, he reveals to us the true inner Greek life, lays bare the secrets of its hearts. . . . The sad, earnest faces grow upon us, the hearts that strain beneath the burden of duty, the souls that weary over the problems of right and wrong, the voices that moan the unanswered question touching the mystery of suffering, the women who beat against the bars of convention and prescription, who wail for sympathy and plead for truth—these who were too mean for Æschylus' regard, too unideal for Sophocles, these of whom Socrates took no heed, to whom he left no legacy, to whose heart-hunger Plato offered the stones of his ideal city—to all such, Euripides stretched the brother hand of one who had also passed through deep waters, who had faced the spectres of the mind, who sighed with them that were desolate and oppressed, who came close to each bereaved heart, sorrowing with stricken parents, and loving the little children."

His next point is that Euripides has revolted against the ancient poetical traditions. Is this true of Euripides?



From the consideration of the degeneration of Euripides, he passes on to bemoan the general degeneration of the times at the hands of the philosophers. From the point of view of Aristophanes as an orthodox believer in the ancient Greek gods, was he justified in his fears that these new theories would throw discredit upon the myths? To us, however, does this movement among the thinkers of the time indicate an immense step toward the truth?

Along with the belief in the old gods goes in Aristophanes a belief in the pleasures of sense. When he criticises Euripides for his idealism, does he really mean his morality? Does he not himself prove the realism of Euripides in the remarks he puts into the mouth of Euripides? (Lines 2114-2140.)

Does Aristophanes show that he misunderstands Euripides because he cannot imagine a religious attitude that is not based on a belief in the reality of the ancient gods?—and because his moral ideals were ahead of those which Aristophanes' gods inculcated? (Lines 2140-2152.)

In his outbreak (lines 2152-2189) does he make the artistic criticism that only some subjects are fitted for poetry, while Euripides is inclined to include all things; and the social criticism, that slaves and women are necessarily inferior beings to men? (For the treatment of women by Euripides, see "The Ideals of Womanhood held by Browning and the Greek Dramatists," *Poet-lore*, Vol. IX., pp. 385-400.)

In his beautiful words about the spell under which the true poet works, does Aristophanes seem to contradict his own aims in poetry as before described? Is there any such contradiction in his own work, which Browning has thus subtly worked into the

portrayal of his personality? Murray says: "His most characteristic quality, perhaps, is his combination of the wildest and broadest farce on the one hand, with the most exquisite lyric beauty on the other."

In giving the opinion of Hellas, does Aristophanes show that Euripides had a certain popularity in spite of his failure to take the prize very often? This is borne out by history, is it not? Was his popularity greater out of Athens than in it? (See Introduction to Vol. II. of Way's "Euripides in English Verse.")

What reasons does he give for choosing Comedy instead of Tragedy? And how does he make this an occasion for another dig at Euripides?

What were Satyr plays? and what was the custom in regard to them? (See Chapter on Drama in Murray's "Ancient Greek Literature.")

After pointing out how he has succeeded in correcting the abuses of the times with his Comedy, how does he declare Comedy accomplishes these good results? Is there some truth in his conclusion that the ignorant will be more impressed with invectives hurled against an enemy than with arguments? Is his reason for making fun of Bacchos consistent with his reasons for making fun of Lamachos or Euripides? He makes fun of Bacchos in order to show how entirely that god is superior to his own portrayal of him, while he makes fun of Lamachos, the general, in order to show how bad war is, and of Euripides in order to show how bad his artistic, moral, and religious principles are.

Does it look very much as if, as he went on, he became so fond of slander for its own sake that he

dared anything in that line, and had to invent fresh arguments for its usefulness as a moral implement? Does a reading of the plays of Aristophanes bear this out?

In the opening of her reply to Aristophanes, does Balaustion exhibit a blending of courtesy and sarcasm calculated to flatter Aristophanes, and at the same time show him how little his arguments have convinced her?

The first point she makes against him is that Comedy did not arise with freedom; the second, that Aristophanes, by his own showing, has improved upon it so that he may be considered the inventor of it, and therefore cannot claim ancient authority. Are these good points, and are they supported by the historical facts in the case? His methods being proved new, what point does she make against the newness of his aims for reform?

After sketching briefly his methods for carrying out his reforms, in order to assure herself that she has not misunderstood him, she proceeds to show that none of the reforms he talks about have been accomplished, and why does she declare they fail?

In her attack upon his way of showing the advantages of peace over war, she makes her point against the *sort* of pleasures Aristophanes praises as belonging to peace. Would there be anything against Aristophanes' method of showing the advantages of peace if he presented high ideals of the happiness growing out of peace?

Does Balaustion seem to distinguish here between his principle, which is good, and his manner of carrying it out, which is bad?

Is she not entirely right in her conclusion that

whatever power there may be in invective is weakened by carrying invective to the point of lying, and that in doing this Aristophanes has degenerated from, instead of improving upon, the old Comedy?

Finally, she shows that he not only depends upon lies for making his hits against his enemies, but that he lies about what he himself intends to do, — in fact that his whole fabric of Comedy rests upon lies, and therefore it cannot succeed as a reforming influence, such an influence being possible only to truth.

Is this conclusion of hers justified by the inconsistencies in the argument of Aristophanes as Browning presents it? Could it be supported by a study of the plays in relation to the remarks made in the various Parabases of the plays?

Having shown that every statement he has made is false, she finally declares that he has not used his powers in inventing anything really new, for all that he has done has been done by his contemporaries in Comedy before him. Is this also borne out by hints from the literary history of the time?

In her attack upon him has Balaustion cleverly picked out his most vulnerable spot, — his lack of sincerity and truthfulness, — and by not attacking his fundamental theories has she implied that it was not worth while to attack the theories of a man so insincere that he would invent a new one to suit every occasion? Such theories might, abstractly speaking, have truth in them, but as presented by Aristophanes they were worthless.

Does Balaustion also show her cleverness in not attempting to prove that Euripides has done any good to his age, and her inborn conviction that his influence in the long run must be for good in considering that

the best defence of Euripides will be found in one of his own plays ?

The translation of the "Herakles" following is related to the subject only upon the question of its value as a translation. For those whose knowledge of Greek is insufficient to decide this matter for themselves, a comparison may be made with the literal translation in the Bohn Edition and Arthur S. Way's poetical translation in "Euripides in English Verse." Mr. Way says that, unhappily for succeeding translators, the 'Madness of Herakles' has already been given by Browning to English readers.

It is evident, is it not, that this play of Euripides softens and impresses Aristophanes, whose defence of himself takes a humbler tack, though it draws a distinction between himself and Euripides which is not warranted exactly by the facts ?

Is the exit of Aristophanes thoroughly characteristic in its throwing off of any serious impressions and his confident putting of himself at the top again ?

Does Balaustion show at the end that she had some comprehension of the fact that Aristophanes was not quite as bad as she thought him, since it might be that he had not conceived of any ideals better than those he defended ?

In the closing scenes has Browning again combined history with imagination in a way that makes the fall of Athens a living reality to us ?

In the consideration of these two poems as criticisms of Euripides and Aristophanes, it should be remembered that Browning, if not the first, was among the first to re-instate Euripides, who had been deeply appreciated by the great minds following him both among the

ancients and in mediæval times, but who had been the subject for a hundred years of utterly unappreciative criticism at the hands of the dry-as-dust Classicists, and that now a recognition of his true worth is growing in every direction. (Mahaffy, Jebb, Murray, and Way may be consulted upon this point.)

Of Browning's Greek work there remains only the translation of "Agamemnon" and the fragment "O Love! Love." Many have said of the "Agamemnon" that it is more difficult to read than the very difficult Greek. This difficulty grows out of the attempt to reflect the ruggedness of the Greek style, which Browning avowed was his purpose.

Mrs. Orr says, in her "Life and Letters": "Mr. Browning's deep feeling for the humanities of Greek literature, and his almost passionate love for language, contrasted strongly with his refusal to regard even the first of Greek writers as models of literary style. The pretensions raised for them on this ground were inconceivable to him; and his translation of the 'Agamemnon,' published 1877, was partly made, I am convinced, for the pleasure of exposing these claims and of rebuking them."

In spite of the difficulties, which are not insurmountable, is it not a satisfaction to have so masterful a reflection of the characteristics of the Greek? (This translation may be compared with Potter's and Plumptre's.)

Is the lyric translated from Euripides for Mahaffy beyond criticism, so exquisitely beautiful is the same? (Besides the articles already mentioned, interesting opinions and suggestions may be gathered from these papers in the published volume of the Boston Browning Society Papers: "The Classical Element in

Browning's Poetry," by William Cranston Lawton ;  
"The Greek Spirit in Shelley and Browning," by  
Vida D. Scudder ; "Homer and Browning," by Pren-  
tiss Cummings. In the London Browning Society  
Papers : "On Aristophanes' Apology," by J. B. Bury,  
Part VIII.)



## AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POEMS

*Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*—  
Glimpses of Browning Himself.

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*General Suggestions.*—The story Browning tells, in "Development," of the slow degrees by which the growing boy becomes aware of what a great people's literary masterpieces really mean, is an image of devel-

opment in the general life of all mankind, and of the gradual attainment unto a closer and closer apprehension of truth through the dreams and fancies of immaturity. (For a concise account of Homeric facts and criticism, see Murray's "Ancient Greek Literature," Chap. I.) But it has an obvious autobiographical interest also, and gives the earliest glimpse Browning affords us of his own boyhood.

His father, Robert Browning the elder, was, in fact, "a scholar and knew Greek," and not in a perfunctory way, but familiarly. He knew by heart the first book of the "Iliad," as a schoolboy, and it "was one of his amusements at school," says Mrs. Orr, in her "Life and Letters" of the son, "to organize Homeric combats among the boys, in which the fighting was carried on in the manner of the Greeks and Trojans, and he and his friend Kenyon would arm themselves with swords and shields, and hack at each other lustily, exciting themselves to battle by insulting speeches derived from the Homeric text." It is said of him that he used to soothe the poet to sleep, when a child, by humming to him an ode of Anacreon. This story of the game he contrived of the Siege of Troy, through which the budding poet of five years learned "who was who and what was what" in the famous tale of the Iliad, is apparently what actually took place. It is a picture of judiciously helpful and friendly relations between father and son, inspiring enough in this particular instance, but exemplifying an ideal parenthood throughout life, in many more such ways, of which this poem may be taken as a memorial.

The son said of the father, upon his death in his eighty-fifth year, a characteristic word, casting light

upon his own feeling for his wife as well as for his father: "... this good, unworldly, kind-hearted, religious man, whose powers, natural and acquired, would so easily have made him a notable man, had he known what vanity or ambition or the love of money or social influence meant. As it is, he was known by half-a-dozen friends. He was worthy of being Ba's father — out of the whole world, only he, so far as my experience goes. She loved him — and *he* said, very recently, while gazing at her portrait, that only that picture had put into his head that there might be such a thing as the worship of the images of saints."

The character of Robert Browning, Senior, might be shown to be in itself an explanation of the favorable conditions his son enjoyed for his life and work as a poet. Information bearing on this may be gleaned from Mrs. Orr's account. ("Life and Letters of Robert Browning;" see also "Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett," and "The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.")

In the digression in the third book of "Sordello," Browning gives a glimpse of what his ideals were as a young poet. In this he directly tells how he had pledged his art to serve the cause of the people. He confesses that his ardor for all the world's oppressed ones had undergone some change. He no longer required only the completely good which his first dreams for them had pictured. Now he would open out all opportunities for them, leaving it for them to develop freely their own powers in their own way, through evil as well as good. He thus reaffirms but the more deeply the original devotion of his art to the people, choosing that the race shall be his Muse, and

adapting his art, therefore, to suit more inclusive needs than those of the nicely selective.

In the succinct expression of his political views, drawn from him by the question, "Why I am a Liberal," many years after this, in 1885, only four years before his death, the principle of liberty and opportunity for development — for living, loving, laboring freely — is the same broadly inclusive one upon which he stood at the threshold of his career. The dependence of every one for any advance upon conditions that are favorable, as well as upon liberty, is here also distinctly stated; "fortune" must "set free body and soul" to pursue the purpose "God traced for both." It seems, therefore, does it not? as if it would be long before Browning's political and social creed would grow out of date by being superseded in practical desire for human progress.

The broad hint of what his personal democratic ideals for man found requisite, as given here, and the personal ardor for its attainment, expressed in "Sordello," may be corroborated by placing in correlation with these revelations of himself various subtler hints and implications throughout his work (see "Browning as the Poet of Democracy," Oscar L. Triggs, *Poet-lore*, Vol. IV., pp. 481-490, October, 1892, and "The Purport of Browning's and Whitman's Democracy," an editorial article in *Poet-lore*, Vol. V., pp. 556-566, November, 1895), and also by comparison of passages in the "Letters" (volumes already cited) which show how his sympathies went out, for example, to Abd el Kadr, and to strugglers for liberty everywhere, in Italy, or in the United States when it was a question of freeing the slaves, or in England when it was a question of the landlords' corn laws, etc.

The greater number of direct glimpses of his ideas and feelings which his work affords the reader come out in expressions of personal love.

In "Waring" his friendship for Alfred Domett appears, and in a way which shows how sensitively encouraging he deemed it right friends should be to the aims and undertakings, literary, artistic, or otherwise, of one another.

In "The Guardian Angel" a tender warmth of heart expresses itself in a desire to bring together, in an association with a work of art suggesting cherishing and guardian care, his old friend, Domett, and his new-won wife.

"May and Death" is a little tribute of the heart to another early friend, his cousin, Charles Silverthorne.

Later, in the closing lines of "Balaustion's Adventure," the picture of a friend is spoken of, Sir Frederick Leighton's "Death of Alkestis" (see frontispiece to Vol. VIII., *Camberwell Browning*), in close relation with a personal mention of his wife's poem, "Wine of Cyprus," with its lyrical epithet for Euripides.

In "One Word More," as in "The Ring and the Book," at its opening and its close, direct dedication of his heart's supreme homage is publicly and, as it were, ceremonially offered to his wife.

Besides these unmistakable addresses to her, there is a chain of personal lyricism almost continuously present throughout his prologues and epilogues. These are so perfectly suited to the temper of the devotion, elsewhere more manifestly shown, that, veiled as they are in a reserved beauty that blends with the work they accompany, it may readily be argued that it is right to place them with the other lyrics more frankly dedicated to her. The clews, scattered here and there,

which the various volumes of "Letters" supply, may be adduced to reinforce the claim that the Prologue and Epilogue to "Fifine," to "Jocoseria" ("Wanting is What" and "Never the Time and the Place"), and the Epilogue to "Ferishtah's Fancies" are all spiritual expressions of personal devotion to the "Lyric Love" of his life, although so couched generally as to fit in with the special subject and temper of the poems they introduce or follow. The Prologue and Epilogue to "Fifine," for example, in their relation both to Mrs. Browning and to the poem, may be shown to be an open secret to the sympathetic reader, and the similar appropriateness of the other prologues here cited to their theme and to this personal relationship may be traced in the same way. It may be claimed, in short, that the lyrist in her constantly educed the lyrist in him.

The perpetuity of the poet's exalted emotional loyalty towards Elizabeth Barrett Browning, during the almost thirty years elapsing between her death in the summer of 1861 and his own in December, 1889, is finally exemplified in the heat of his indignation against Mr. Edward Fitzgerald. In lines that were almost his last, he was stirred to resent, on the day he first learned of it, that a man whom his wife had never seen had thanked God that she was dead.

"Women and Roses," at first sight, it may seem, has little claim to be placed with the chain of lyrical outbursts associated with his companion poet. The unusual praise of women of all time, past, present, and to come, which is the motive of this lyric, as praise flowing from his knowledge and love of one woman, by whom all that all other women could be was interpreted and revealed, and through whom, therefore, they all make but indirectly their appeal to him, consti-

tute it a lyric of homage so eminent that to leave this out would be to ignore the captain jewel in the carcanet.

Internal evidence of this lyric being based on a special personal feeling need not be alone depended upon. The fact recorded by Mrs. Orr (see "Life and Letters") that the poem was suggested by some flowers sent to his wife further warrants the placing of it here as an autobiographical glimpse.

What Browning's own personal ideas of religion were has been confidently outlined and dissertated upon often, without much caution to discriminate dramatic from purely subjective expression. Upon what mobile, many-faceted evidence most of these confident deductions rest, may be perceived when all his poems upon religion are set in order and relation one to another. Aside from "Christmas Day" (see programme "The Evolution of Religion" for special study of this poem), there is no directly personal expression as to religion in relation to revealed Christianity which is not uttered through some dramatic mask and placed in relation to a background of its own as belonging to a special phase of development, except in the case of the Third Speaker in the Epilogue to "Dramatis Personæ" and in "La Saisiaz." In both of these the attitude held may be shown to be that of one who waives authoritative assurance of the relation of God to the soul, and who finds it rationally and emotionally sufficient to accept assurance felt individually. His last personal expression in "Reverie" of his speculative religious philosophy parts altogether with authority, and accords with "La Saisiaz" and the Third Speaker, and justifies this general conclusion while attaining to an expression transcending in serenity both of these earlier expressions.



Not until late in life, and after much ignoring, did Browning betray himself personally in relation to the censure of critics. When the general public was showing unmistakable signs of awakening to a perception of his poetic power, and certain superficial writers, as if alarmed at the consequences, if such originality won the day despite them, renewed attack with an animosity and assumption of authority as defenders of Art peculiarly hard to bear, — since what he had written was never undesigned, whatever else it might be, — he then broke out upon such critics, particularly on Alfred Austin, with a half-gleeful big giant's fierceness, in "Pacchiarotto," at the pygmy duplicity of their high concern for Art. (See Notes on this poem, *Camberwell Browning*, Vol. IX., p. 296.) In "Pambo" he asserted his steadfast attempt to hold to his aim and look to his expression of it. Having done both his life long, he accounted it fair to conclude that his defects were defects of his quality. "People accuse me of not taking pains! I take nothing but pains!" Mrs. Orr writes that she heard him say. And in the Epilogue to "Pacchiarotto," also, questioning the devotion his critical public pretended to the antique poets, since it contents itself with but five or six of Shakespeare's forty works, and with mere "drips and drops" from Milton's four great poems, he reminds them that the sweetness and music they profess to adore in the elder poets is the result of a quality that inures to art as to wine, from time's effect. The history of originality in genius, he implies, goes to show that art, like wine, which endures time's test, is poured in "stark strength," and mellowed by age. If he himself has grudged nothing of might in the juice he has poured and leaves to the future's verdict, he has

no reason to be troubled over the result beforehand, least of all to be disturbed as to these critics' manifestly insincere devotion to those classics upon which they profess to base their condemnation.

Finally, in the Epilogue to "Asolando" he says a word for himself as one who never faltered in any of these his devotions, whether of love, of social and religious faith, of art, but in his especial place, from the line of advance, where he was placed, pressed steadily onward.

*Queries for Discussion.* — Is it fair to Browning to affirm that he expresses his personal opinions through his characters?

Would considering that he does so be to attribute to him far more circumscribed and precise views of life and thought than could be made to agree with the large general principles, or the specifically individual standpoints which his certainly autobiographical poems do reveal to be his?

What should you conclude was the fundamental principle alike underlying all his manifestly subjective expressions: (1) as to Society, in general, which he would have as free to develop as he himself has been; (2) as to Faith, which he would have every man feel as cheerfully as he himself has felt it; (3) as to Love and Friendship, as necessarily personal, and which were to him inspiring and continuing? Is the fundamental principle underlying all his subjective expressions the independent worth and validity of each individual soul?

If so, is this principle inconsistent with the use of his own characters to give expression, not to their relative points of view, but to his own as absolute?

Is the only expression through his characters of his

own way of thinking, which would be natural for a man holding the view he does of himself, as shown in his autobiographical poems, an expression of the relation of each character to its own special environment, nature, and development, as he has artistically conceived these to be in each case?

Is it characteristic of Browning, judging from the few poems he has written which do reveal himself directly, to alter, disguise, and cast side lights upon whatsoever material of any sort he does make use of which is peculiar to himself, or in any way private and personal? (*E. g.*, the references to Landor and Euphrasia at end of Book III., "Sordello" — see Notes on same in *Camberwell Browning* — or the prologue and epilogues, mentioned, which are blindly dedicated to Mrs. Browning.)

## BROWNING'S PHILOSOPHY

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I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* —  
The Thought Side of Browning's Philosophy.

*General Suggestions.* — In considering Browning's philosophy it will be interesting to observe, first, what his attitude is to the great doctrine of the nineteenth century, namely, Evolution. Three passages in particular may be instanced as illustrating directly this doctrine: one in "Paracelsus" (Vol. I., p. 35, Part V., lines 642-883); in "Bernard de Mandeville" (Vol. XII., p. 79, stanzas ix., x., xi.); in "Francis Furini" (Vol. XII., p. 120, stanzas ix., x.). In each case the doctrine of development is influenced by the speaker's way of looking at it. In the first it is God's love which unfolds this stupendous drama of development and continues it in the realm of mind and spirit ever toward his own perfection. In the second the

sun is the moving power in calling forth the life of earth; in the third the search for the cause ends in ignorance. Again, in the first the belief that the moving power is God's love is wholly intuitional, in keeping with the personality of Paracelsus. In the second the idea is presented in a thoroughly scientific manner, — the sun actually being the stimulator of life in all its various stages; but if we look at the passage more closely, we shall see that the speaker uses the sun and its action as a symbol of divine force, which, by the help of Prometheus, is revealed to man as love through his own human experiences of blessedness. (See Introduction, Vol. XII., *Camberwell Browning*.) The result is the same as in the previous passage, but it is reached by reasoning instead of being merely stated. In the third is presented the purely scientific method of seeking the cause of phenomena, which, it is acknowledged by all thinkers, ends in ignorance; and the speaker accepts this, as far as it goes, but adds that it may be supplemented by human consciousness, which realizes itself to be the result of a cause, and through its manifestations in human passions gets a glimmer of the nature of that cause.

Browning's whole work will be found to be permeated with the doctrines of development and progress and the correlative doctrine, relativity, exemplified in failure, intellectual, moral, artistic.

It is impossible to point out all the passages in which this doctrine is illustrated, but among the most striking are the following: in "Sordello," (Vol. II., p. 93, Book V., lines 98-233), which gives a vision of historical development or social ideals from the time of Charlemagne to Sordello; "Cleon" (Vol. V., p. 80, lines 60-151), showing intellectual

development (lines 189-220), showing the development from beast to man; "Rabbi Ben Ezra" (Vol. V., p. 175, stanzas xii., xiii., xiv., xv.), which illustrates the development from youth to age; "A Death in the Desert" (Vol. V., p. 183, lines 424-447 and 453-473), which illustrates the development of religious conceptions; "Fifine at the Fair" (Vol. IX., p. 681, lines 1885-2047 and 2160-2199), which illustrates the fact that all human expressions, whether in art, morals, or religion, develop toward the truth, though never giving complete expression to it; "The Sun" (Vol. XII., p. 14, lines 18-62), which illustrates symbolically the development of the religious conception of a cause to be worshipped from something palpable to the impalpable, inconceivable; "Charles Avison" (Vol. XII., p. 154, lines 322-381), which illustrates the thought that underneath all changes truth persists, and that every expression has its permanent value as a revealer of the truth.

The doctrine of evolution is also illustrated in the poet's work by the fact that in his portrayals of national life he has chosen periods and figures which emphasize steps in the progress of civilization and sometimes degeneration (also a phenomenon of evolution). It comes out in his art poems and his music poems; and in his innumerable short sketches of men and women, character is seen at crucial moments, taking it forwards and sometimes backwards, and finally the whole range of his men and women illustrate higher and lower stages of soul development.

From the poet's scientific attitude to his metaphysical attitude is an easy transition. The latter has already been indicated in many of the passages cited. The basis of his religious belief he finds in human

consciousness as manifested in feeling rather than in thought or knowledge. On the side of feeling, he believes mankind realizes more completely its kinship with the divine force that moves the world. This world-force he calls Love, which in humanity becomes an aspiration toward an ultimate ideal of perfection. This aspiration shows itself in many ways, from an attitude of gratefulness for gifts received to a recognition of the divine element in human love, both in its romantic and its social phases. The proof that love is more directly revealed than knowledge lies in the fact that intellectual effort, be it exerted never so strenuously, is unable to attain any knowledge of the underlying cause of things. In the failure which always meets it, however, there is ever the assurance that absolute knowledge is yet to reach, and therefore that it exists though the human intellect cannot grasp it. On the other hand, the exaltation that comes of love and aspiration is something actually experienced and therefore known.

Along with the idea of aspiration goes its shadow, failure of attainment, and so evil is born. The question as to the origin and the use of evil frequently occupies Browning. God being manifest in Love, then evil must be permitted by him for some good end. As we fail to attain absolute knowledge, so we fail to attain absolute good. One of the offices of evil, then, is to assure us that good is yet to attain and so keep spurring us on to try and attain it. Another office of evil, as manifested in pain, is to give rise to the beautiful virtues of pity and sympathy and endurance. Another is that if evil had not existed we should not have been able to appreciate good, — that is, that the two ideas are relative to each other, and



without one we could not have the other. It must be asked here, however, if evil is so productive of good, why should any one work against it? and the poet's reply is that evil exists for the purpose of developing the soul by means of the strenuous efforts it must make to overcome the evil.

The most complete presentation of this phase in the poet's philosophy will be found in the following poems: in "A Pillar at Sebzevar" (Vol. XII., p. 41), which emphasizes the worth of love over knowledge; "Cherries" (Vol. XII., p. 34), emphasizing the worth of love in the humble form of thanks for the pleasure derived from eating cherries; "Plot Culture" (Vol. XII., p. 315), emphasizing the worth of emotional love; "Mihrab Shah" (Vol. XII., p. 20), showing how pain in the world is a necessary element for the development of Love; "A Bean-Stripe: also, Apple-Eating" (Vol. XII., p. 46, line 290 to the end), illustrating the point that God is known through the mystery of feeling which seeks the cause of this feeling in grateful acknowledgment. Other passages to be noted are in "Bernard de Mandeville" (lines 1-131), which declares that out of the effort to overcome evil results good, therefore we should not wish our lives to be utterly untouched by evil. In "Francis Furini" (Vol. XII., p. 120), the need of evil in order that good may be recognized is dwelt upon (lines 410-525).

These same thoughts are illustrated again in a series of speculative lyrics, written from time to time; namely, "Pisgah Sights" (Vol. IX., p. 203, No. I. and II.) shows how evil and good seem reconciled in life to one who is just dying; "Fears

and Scruples" (Vol. IX., p. 206) reasons that God must be love because man loves; "Rephan" (Vol. XII., p. 256) proves the need of evil as a spur to effort; "Reverie" (Vol. XII., p. 380) argues that the nature of God in its ultimate essence must be Love.

Another slight transition brings us to the more purely religious aspects of his thought, including his attitude toward the religious doctrines of the past, his own conception of God, and his attitude toward God and immortality.

A study of his religious poems reveals the fact that he considers Christianity to be peculiarly the religion of love, and that as such it is the highest religious conception attained by humanity. But it also reveals the fact that he does not interpret it literally to himself, but as a symbol of the sort of revelation he believes in as possible to every human being. He believes, as we have already seen, under the passages cited on evolution, that religious conceptions evolve, and that each conception holds the inner truth for humanity, though the outward form of it may grow intellectually insufficient as knowledge increases. But this dropping away of an old form must not be regarded for one moment as affecting the central, eternal truth of religion and the good growing out of it as eternal.

While he reasons that Love is the most essential element of the divine nature, his conception of God includes the attribute of Power, as we see in the poem "Reverie," already cited. The attitude to be held toward the Infinite should be religious and human rather than philosophical, because the philosophical attitude is likely to paralyze the human will. For example, while the philosophical attitude gives us a

large conception of God as permitting evil for a good purpose, the human attitude is to follow its inborn impulse to overcome evil, and realize that its attempts to explain evil are, after all, only human. His attitude toward immortality is a stanch belief in it, though he confesses he has no indubitable proof to offer for it. Simply he believes in God and the soul, and in his own consciousness lives the assurance that the soul is immortal. Only so can the Love of God be reconciled in his mind with the evil and failure in this world.

Finally, he insists that his religious conceptions are those which make the truth of religion clear to him, but he does not attempt to force them upon any one else, for others may only be able to see the truth in another way. The poems which illustrate these ideas most clearly are the following: In "Christmas Eve" (Vol. IV., p. 286) we find expressed his belief that all religions have their centre of truth, and that his is for himself alone, and in lines 271-375 his conception of the nature of God is given. The Epilogue to "Dramatis Personæ" (Vol. V., p. 276) emphasizes the fact that Browning's own standpoint is not reached through the authority of a special historical revelation, but through that of an individual revelation in his own heart. This is also shown in "Easter-Day" (Vol. IV., p. 327). The speaker (probably the poet) asks himself the question as to the worth of the historical story of the redemption to him. He answers in a vision that shows its spiritual worth to him as an ideal that could only have been suggested by divine Love manifesting itself in the heart of man, but as a historical actuality it seems he could not accept it without doubt. (See lines 1010 to end.)

"The Sun" (Vol. XII., p. 14) points out that the human conception of God must have an element of the Infinite in it. Compare with "The Pope" (Vol. VII., p. 163, lines 1841-1881).

Poems illustrating the poet's attitude toward God are "The Melon-Seller" (Vol. XII., p. 4), which inculcates the doctrine that reverses are to be accepted cheerfully as being more one's due than good. "The Family" (Vol. XII., p. 11) teaches that man should not try to ape God's wisdom, but should, when he sees anything that seems to him wrong, pray God to change it. In other words, it is an argument against adopting the fatalistic attitude of accepting without resistance whatever evil befalls instead of trying to remove it.

The chief poem on Immortality is "La Saisiaz" (Vol. XI., p. 70; see special digest of this in Notes). Abt Vogler (Vol. V., p. 169) also looks forward to a heaven where the broken arcs of earth will be completed. Paracelsus (Vol. I., p. 35) sees a flying point of bliss remote where pleasure climbs its heights forever and forever (Part V., lines 640-651). In "One Word More" (Vol. V., p. 93) the poet speaks of attaining other heights in other lives, and in "Old Pictures in Florence" (Vol. IV., p. 52) he expresses desire for rest rather than attainment in the future life (see stanzas xxi. and xxii.).

*Queries for Discussion.* — Do the passages bearing upon Evolution cited show that we always hear Browning speaking through his characters?

Has not Evolution been an idea prevalent in the world for so long a time in different forms that it would naturally find expression through many minds?

Does the personality of the speakers in all cases modify the idea ?

Are there any passages where we feel sure we have the poet's own opinion ?

Browning's acceptance of the doctrine of Evolution is generally acknowledged, possibly because it has been wellnigh universally accepted, so that no partisans have any desire to claim him as opposed to it. No doubt such a partisan could make an argument if he wished to do so. It is otherwise, however, with his religious and philosophical attitude. He has been claimed by many to be a Christian in the most orthodox sense. An able discussion upon him from this point of view may be found in Miss Vida D. Scudder's "Life of the Spirit in Modern English Poets." He has also been criticised for basing his philosophy upon the revelation of feeling instead of upon the higher reason. This is discussed by Henry Jones in his "Browning as a Religious and Philosophical Teacher." Other articles which take a view more or less in harmony with the facts as indicated in this study are in the "London Browning Society Papers" — "Browning's Philosophy," by John Bury in Part III. ; "The Religious Teaching of Browning," by Miss Dorothea Beale, Part III. ; "Some Prominent Points in Browning's Teaching," by W. A. Raleigh, Part V. ; "Browning's Theism," by Josiah Royce, "Boston Browning Society Papers." The Introduction to this work and the Introduction to Vol. XII. of the *Camberwell Browning* should be consulted also for further hints.

Whatever you may decide for yourself is his attitude toward Christianity in its historical aspect, may it not be said that his religious attitude preserves the spirit of

Christianity which is love to God and man, and that in the face of all the doubts and the pessimism let loose upon this century through the non-comprehension of science and the despair at evil, he inspires an unbounded trust in his own Pippa's words, —

“ God 's in his heaven, —  
All 's right with the world ” ?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*  
— The Practical Side of Browning's Philosophy.

*General Suggestions.* — When we come to consider the bearing of Browning's philosophy upon individual action, we find that he believes every individual should have an ideal, and that the human will should be exercised in choosing a path in life which will lead towards the accomplishment of that ideal. No matter if failure results, the will should never falter and faith never be lost. So important does he consider the will, that it appears to him preferable that a human being should exercise the will in the following out of a bad path, rather than stagnate through inability to choose any path at all.

As to the direction in which choice should go, he declares that one ought to be true to his own nature. He even finds a glimmer of hope for the criminal on the ground that he has been working out the truth of his nature, for example, in the case of Guido, who Pompilia thinks may have been acting according to the truth of his nature, and for whom there may be healing in God's shadow. He possibly thinks, with Ixion, that sin is the result of the darkening of the soul by the meshes of sense. At any rate, he does not believe in eternal punishment, arguing that sin brings its own punishment along with it in this life. Further-

more, he does not presume to decide what is right and what is wrong for anybody but himself.

The most exalted human manifestation to him is love which is unselfish and constant in its devotion. A sin against love is a sin against the highest truth of which the nature is capable.

A natural result of his insistence upon the worth of the individual is his social attitude, which is liberal and democratic.

Illustrations of these points may be found in "Francis Furini" (Vol. XII., p. 120), in which stress is laid upon man's part to fight the evils he sees, God's plan being that evil, though meant for good, should seem wrong to man, in order that he should have the moral spur of needing to overcome it; in the Pope in "The Ring and the Book" (Vol. VII., p. 163), whose conclusion is that "life's business is just the terrible choice" (see line 1233). In "The Two Poets of Croisic" (Vol. X., p. 230) the paralysis of the will growing out of a vision from an infinite point of view is objected to; the same thought is touched upon in "An Epistle" (Vol. V., p. 10). Paralysis of the will was the sin in "The Statue and the Bust" (Vol. IV., p. 265). In "The Eagle" (Vol. XII., p. 3) it is pointed out that man's will should lead him to live in the midst of the world of men doing good. In "A Camel-Driver" (Vol. XII., p. 26) the argument is that though eternal punishment would be unjust, mankind should punish the evil-doer, because punishment is a means of teaching; in other words, it is man's will fighting against evil.

In "Two Camels" (Vol. XII., p. 30) it is claimed that in order to do one's work in the world of increasing its happiness, one must *know* happiness,



therefore it is not well to renounce joy, for one's own sake, but to cultivate it for the sake of others. In "A Bean-Stripe : also, Apple-Eating" (Vol. XII., p. 46) the difficulty of deciding what is evil and what is not evil is emphasized, and the lesson taught that only what comes home directly to one as evil should be striven against (see lines 243-245).

"When cold from over-mounts spikes through and through  
Blood, bone and marrow of Ferishtah, — then,  
Time to look out for shelter."

About the evils of the world which he cannot reach, Ferishtah thinks it better not to worry, but leave them in God's hands, and dwell upon the fact of the good in the world which sheds a light over the black of evil, so that life is on the whole gray, that is, nearer white than black.

Miranda, in "Red-Cotton Night-cap Country," is an example of weakness of will, on account of which the poet thought him a failure (see programme on this poem.) Clara, on the other hand, he considers more of a success, because she lived out her nature to the best of her ability. Sordello (Vol. II., p. 93) is an example of the struggle of the will with reference to personal morality and social good.

Illustrations of the reverence due to love are so numerous that it will be possible to point out only a few of the instances. Taking the characters in the longer poems, Paracelsus was undone because he did not recognize the worth of love in man's estate; Strafford's motive of action was love for the king, while in Pym personal love and love for a great principle were at war, and Pym chose the higher ideal; the guiding principle in the life of Charles was love for

his father Victor; Valence and Norbert reverence love as the great truth of existence, and not to respond to it and be true to it would be to cast a shadow upon God's own light. The speaker in the little poem "Cristina" feels love to be a revelation. The Duchess in "The Flight of the Duchess" could not live without the regenerating influence of love. Andrea del Sarto feels love to be the great truth of his life in spite of the faithlessness of the beloved. Caponsacchi and Pompilia felt love to be a revelation from above. Browning dubs the lady in "Daniel Bartoli" (Vol. XII., p. 89) a saint, because she reverences love by making the only choice consistent with the preservation of its honor.

In "Why I am a Liberal" (Vol. XII., p. 279) the poet's democracy comes out in his belief that every one should have freedom to "live, love and labor freely." In the digression in "Sordello" (Vol. II., p. 93) his liberal opinions find direct expression (see programme on this poem and on autobiographical poems); also in "Charles Avison" (Vol. XII., p. 154, stanzas xiv. and xvi.). "The Lost Leader" (Vol. IV., p. 41) also illustrates his liberal position. Indirectly it may be seen in his treatment of historical subjects, as in "Strafford" (see programme on this poem); in Luigi's part in "Pippa Passes" (Vol. I., p. 177); in King Victor's fear of the democratic tendencies of his son in "King Victor and King Charles" (lines 310-319 of Part I., Second Year, Vol. I., p. 237); in Berthold's fear of the growth of democracy in "Colombe's Birthday" (lines 22-45 of Act V., Vol. III., p. 122); in Chiappino, in "A Soul's Tragedy," whose soul's tragedy was his failure to live out the democratic ideal of liberty which he professed (Vol. III., p. 257).

Although, in accordance with Browning's moral attitude toward life, every one should strive for the attainment of an ideal, if that ideal is not attained in life, it is not to be considered a cause of regret, but an evidence of the fact that another life exists in which attainment may be realized. Thus, Rabbi Ben Ezra is thankful for what he aspired to be and was not (Vol. V., p. 169, lines 38-41); Abt Vogler declares our failure here to be a triumph's evidence for the fulness of the days (Vol. III., p. 169, lines 81-82). Optimism in the face of failure is illustrated symbolically in "Childe Roland" (Vol. IV., p. 277), and directly in the Epilogue to "Asolando" (Vol. XII., p. 267).

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Do you find Browning's moral attitude to be entirely in harmony with his philosophical and religious attitude?

In basing his religious faith upon the direct revelation of human aspiration in mankind, and his moral faith upon the power of will to achieve ideals, has Browning successfully rebutted the pessimism of the nineteenth century which has followed upon the scientific demolition of some of the old grounds of belief?

Does he successfully meet the difficulty he evidently feels in attributing the origin of evil to the Omniscient Power of the universe, — that difficulty being the danger that such a belief may tend to fatalism and the stagnation of the will?

If good and evil are equally the creation of an Omniscient Power, it may be asked why should mankind will to follow one more than the other? to which might it be answered, that the belief in the superiority of goodness over evil has been a constantly present aspiration of the human mind, and since an Omniscient Power has created both evil and good, is it not reason-

able to suppose that he is also the implanter of a belief that good is better than evil? Is this, literally speaking, the answer Browning gives?

Whether his grounds for the basis of moral action be considered sufficient or not, in his own personal conviction of the necessity for following a high moral ideal — that is, loyalty to truth — is he not one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest, moral power in nineteenth-century literature?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Æsthetic side of Browning's Philosophy.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — How are Browning's ideas of aspiration, truth to reality, relativity of attainment, the worth of the human soul as the starting-point of life, and the need of will-power illustrated in his expressions on art?

For aspiration in art, as necessary for its highest development, see "Andrea del Sarto" (Vol. V., p. 36), "Abt Vogler" (Vol. V., p. 169). For relativity of attainment, see "Old Pictures in Florence" (Vol. IV., p. 52), "Charles Avison" (Vol. XII., p. 154). (See also studies of these poems in the programmes "Music and Musicians," "Art and the Artist.") For the worth of the human soul as revealed in the human body, see "Fra Lippo Lippi" (Vol. V., p. 24), "Francis Furini" (Vol. XII., p. 120), and "The Lady and the Painter" (Vol. XII., p. 221). For truth to actuality in art, see "Gerard de Lairese" (Vol. XII., p. 140). For the exercise of the will in artistic creation, see the passage in "Pauline" (Vol. I., p. 1, lines 268-280). "Sordello" (Vol. II., p. 93) shows the struggle of the will for artistic mastery, and in "Christopher Smart" (Vol. XII., p. 101) the place of the will

in shaping artistic inspiration toward worthy ends is indicated.

Does Browning's own work further exemplify the harmony between his æsthetic standpoint and his philosophy in his persistent treatment of the struggles and aspirations of the human soul, and in his portrayal of souls, both evil and humble, indicating his belief in the intrinsic worth of all souls and their fitness for artistic treatment ?

## BROWNING'S ARTISTRY

I. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — The Metrical Factors of Browning's Style.

*General Suggestions.* — In studying Browning's verse-form it will be found most profitable and convenient not to begin quite at random, but to attempt an examination, for example, of rhyme and rhythm — as the two main factors of metrical effect — in a few representative poems belonging to several different classes. Scrutiny may be directed upon poems offering general resemblances in metre but decided differences in mood, and belonging to work of various dates, early and late. Such a selection might include, for instance, as a specimen line of investigation, the couplet-rhymed pentameter of serious narrative used in "Sordello," and the same measure, somewhat differently manipulated, in "The Parleying with Bernard de Mandeville;" the purely lyrical rhymed verse of "You'll Love Me Yet," one of the early lyrics, in "Pippa Passes," and "Round Us the Wild Creatures," one of the latest lyrics, in "Ferishtah's Fancies;" the unrhymed blank verse of such a drama as "The Return of the Druses," of the colloquial dramatic monologues "Fra Lippo," "Bishop Blougram," and "A Forgiveness," a later work, and the musing monologues, better called soliloquies, of "Caliban" and the Pope, in "The Ring and the Book;" the rhymed verse, six-stressed, used in the lyrical "Abt

Vogler," in the dramatic idyl "Muléykeh" and in the jocose "Solomon and Balkis;" or, again, the three-stressed rhymed verse of two personal poems of such contrasting temper as "Pacchiarotto" and "Reverie."

It might be supposed, since Browning's art has been often decidedly condemned, that observation of its characteristic traits had been made which warranted such condemnation; but this is not the case. Adverse generalizations have been common, but special observation is rare, and there is comparatively little help prepared for the earnest student of poetic principles and effects. The foregoing programmes offer some suggestions, especially those of the first series, where more detailed study was attempted, and the Introductions to the *Camberwell Browning*. (See, also, articles before cited on Browning's Form and Rhyme, in *Poet-lore*, Vol. II., pp. 234, 300, 480; Vol. V., pp. 258, 436; on "The Reasonable Rhythm of some of Mr. Browning's Poems," in "London Browning Society Papers," Part VIII., Vol. II.)

The "Introduction to Browning" of Mr. Arthur Symons is the only one among the various Browning handbooks that considers metrical artistic effects. Prof. Hiram Corson's "Primer of English Verse" should be consulted for its passages on Browning, and, if procurable, Mr. Arthur Beatty's thesis on "Browning's Verse Form." (Gummere's "Handbook of Poetics" and Brewer's "Orthometry" may be used as reference-books on the general subject of metrical art.)

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Is it evident, from the frequency with which Browning uses unrhymed verse for dramatic, and rhymed verse



for lyrical effects, that he does so designedly? In his later work is it obvious that his long-practised skill with rhyme and irregular rhythm enables him to attain easy colloquial and dramatic effects with rhyme also?

Does classified observation of his use of free rhythm (similar to that called by the Greeks pedestrian-metre, partaking of the flexibility of prose, and marked in English by stress, and by the intercalation at will of one or more weak syllables) reveal carelessness or adroit adaptation to the general impression he sought to awaken?

What does the fact of his use of a measure superficially the same in poems essentially different in effect argue as to his metrical proficiency? — that his ear for verse-music was rough and crude, and his feeling for melody simple, or that his ear was extraordinarily sensitive, and led him to vary and shade each instrument of mere melody which a given metre could supply him, so as to unfold from it complex and unusual harmonies?

Does the evidence his work provides show that he lacked the mastery requisite to manipulate his form at pleasure, so that it should subserve his design and take color from his mood, instead of getting the upper hand of him? Refer to specific poems, with this question in mind, and discuss it in the light of the evidence they afford.

Are Browning's bad rhymes numerous and without any excuse for their oddity except the necessity of getting a rhyme? Or are his rhymes generally good, uncommonly various and rich, his bad rhymes infrequent?

Are the greater number of his rhymes unnoticeable, because blent in the verse-flow so perfectly?

When his rhymes are obtrusive, odd, or forced, are they oftener than not dramatically justifiable? That

is, are they accounted for, either on the score of the strong sense-emphasis, the spirited declamation of the speaker who is the mouthpiece of the poem, the whimsical or sportive nature of the piece, or the abrupt blurring sort of talk habitual to the character, or suitable at the time to the frame of mind presented?

For example, in "The Grammarian's Funeral" (Vol. IV., p. 248, lines 98 and 100), where there is a forced rhyme, is there a special sense-emphasis on "far" and on "bad," due to the opposition between things of near and remote profit to the soul and between the conception of what is good and bad, which makes "far gain" and "bargain" mate more perfectly? And does the spirited partisanship of the speaker for the Grammarian, who practical people would say had no "common sense," further tend to humor this rhyme?

What evidence of design to suit the whimsical humor of the piece do the obtrusive rhymes of "Pacchiarotto" (Vol. IX., p. 171) afford?

Do the odd rhymes of "The Flight of the Duchess" (Vol. IV., p. 219) exemplify design again, because they suit the character and the manner of the huntsman who is relieving his mind by confiding the story to the ear of a friend with whom he feels familiar? In this poem, also, does the change in the quality of the rhymes as well as the rhythm, in lines 567-688 corroborate the inference that the poet designedly made his rhymes subject to oddity during the direct talk of the huntsman, and here subject to the charm exercised by the gypsy?

Does Browning's work elsewhere often indicate that this sort of modelling of his rhymes and rhythm, so that they betray the impress of character and habit or of sudden emotion, is intentional?

II. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.*

— The Element of Language and Symbol.

*General Suggestions.* — The preceding programmes under the topics considering the art of the poems therein included may be referred to ; also the General Introduction to this volume, and Introductions to the *Camberwell Browning* throughout, for remarks bearing on this topic ; elsewhere, for this and the two following divisions of the present programme, there is little to consult that gives the student hints likely to be of assistance. A valuable general study of Browning's diction, on the philological rather than the poetic side, by Mr. O. F. Emerson, will be found in *Modern Language Notes* (April, 1889, briefly quoted in *Poet-lore*, Vol. I., pp. 291-292, June, 1889) ; and an interesting paper on "The Nature Element in Browning's Poetry," by Mrs. E. E. Marean, gives suggestions on imagery drawn from Nature ("Boston Browning Society Papers," pp. 471-487).

Observation of the diction and the similes and metaphors used in the range of work, early and late, before suggested as affording a line of investigation upon characteristics of rhyme and rhythm, may be followed here to advantage, or any of the groups of poems cited in the foregoing programmes may be taken up.

Study, for example, of "Bishop Blougram" (Vol. V., p. 49), an early monologue (1855), would bring out the contemporaneous quality of the English ; the range taken by the allusions, and that those most prominent were to Shakespeare, for instance, upon whom, by the way, Cardinal Wiseman wrote ; the unexalted, unimpassioned, yet clever and clear similes, as those to the sea-voyage and the outfit requisite for a cabin, or those to the traveller passing through different zones of climates and the clothes he would need.

Study, again, of a later monologue, "A Forgiveness" (1876), would reveal the absence of peculiarity in the language, on the whole; the Spanish allusions; the fact that the prominent imagery of the poem related to the "arms of Eastern workmanship," about which the refined cruelty of the speaker's fancy apparently loved to play (Vol. IX., p. 227, lines 248-277), and to the comparison of men of violent passions to bulls (292-301).

The wealth, variety, and oddity of the imagery in "Sordello," and the degree in which it was adapted to the subject of the moment, — as "the thunder phrase" of Æschylus echoing like "a sword's grinding screech braying" a shield, or the "starry paladin" Sidney's "silver speech" "turning intense as a trumpet sounding in the knights to tilt" (Vol. II., p. 93, lines 65 fol.), — if representatively brought forward, could be compared with the imagery suggested by the subject of the Parleying with Bernard de Mandeville in one of Browning's latest poems (Vol. XII., p. 279), wherein the main images are appropriately related to the sun. (See "Sun Symbolism in Browning," *Poet-lore*, Vol. XI., pp. 55-73, January, 1899.)

It will be interesting, in general, in examining the subject of imagery in Browning, to notice whether the metaphors are drawn from the cosmic or out-door nature side of life or the human nature side; whether they apply to the poem fractionally, that is, merely to passages in the poem, or whether they apply to it as a whole, that is, to the entire theme. In the latter case they belong more properly to symbolism than to metaphor, and are often less evident, but certainly not less poetic or skilful.

Among the dramatic romances, for example, which have an element of the narrative and often of the lyrical, also, although expressed through a dramatic personality, there is one, "The Patriot" (Vol. IV., p. 142), whose imagery, if studied, would be seen to be drawn from the human side of life, and to belong especially to the passage where it appears, although also suited to the general theme. The roses and myrtle, of which the patriot speaks in the opening verses, are said to be mixed in his path "like *mad*," a graphic way both of putting before the eye the flowery confusion, and of reminding himself of the frenzy of excitement over him which the crowds had when they strewn his pathway, by the comparison of the look of the heaped intermixture of roses and myrtle with the human quality. So, again, the house-roofs are described as if they were alive themselves, and not merely crowded on top and at windows with onlookers, they seem to "*heave and sway*," etc. The sixth line, in the same way, carries a metaphor — "the air broke into a mist with bells" — which suggests not only the vibrations which actually make the atmosphere quiver with vagueness, like that of a mist, but also the human sense-impression which the repeated concussion of merry bells produces.

Another one of these brief dramatic romances may be cited, again, to show that study of its imagery would reveal very little of the direct sort of metaphor or simile, and that what imagery may here be observed is of the symbolic kind. It is not the graphic variety of symbolism, either, throwing light on the thought, like the rainbow in "*Ixion*," but the impressionistic variety, influencing the mood, as the symbolism of "*Childe Roland*" does, and thus making the reader

aware of the feelings the speaker is outpouring and of their larger significance with reference to the general drift of the poem. The first stanza of "Time's Revenges" (Vol. IV., p. 168), as a whole, through the impression it gives of the speaker's fame, which has brought him through his books, on the spiritual side of him therefore, the devotion of an unknown friend, illustrates by analogy and contrast his frame of mind toward a frivolous lady. She appeals to him on the sensual side, and arouses in him an obsession that makes him eager to sacrifice fame, with all it could mean or promise, to her utter recklessness of him. The two sides of this position, displaying his effective fame and ineffective love, illustrate figuratively the relativities time fosters, and symbolize, as a whole, in this humanistic, dramatic way, very much the same theme as another little poem, "Earth's Immortalities" (Vol. IV., p. 28), presented there in the opposite way, *i. e.*, lyrically and pictorially.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — Does Browning generally adapt his diction and allusions to tone in with the character, the time, and general effect he means to present? As, for example, in "Guido" in "The Ring and the Book" he uses Elizabethanisms and brutally frank descriptive terms; in "Ned Bratts" provincial obsolete English suiting Bunyan's time.

Is the censure of his style due in some degree to unusual allusions and epithets which constitute the means whereby he gives his pictures of historic life their color and local background? Do such characteristics of design in diction convict his work of a difficulty that shows wilful obscurity, or of a careful artistry that will repay study?



Is his use of imagery so varied, by his adaptation of it to suit his various characters, that some of his work will either be bare of metaphor, because it would not be in character for the personality depicted to use it, or employ little that is intrinsically rich or in any way inappropriate to the mood and habits of thought he is indulging, or else rise only occasionally to a lyrical or picturesque climax under stress of sudden emotion or a poetic memory? As, for example, in "Prince Hohenstiel" figures are used that are prosaic and practical for the most part, but when France and Italy are considered in a way likely to evoke the Prince's enthusiasm or memories of an adventurous youth, the style rises into lyrical beauty.

How is it when the character is poetic, as in the poet of "Pauline," of "Sordello," "At the Mermaid"? What evidence is there of successive mental attitudes more or less disposed alternately to graphic description, to reasoning, to emotional expression in passages where the poet is speaking in his own person, as in "La Saisiaz" and the digression in the third book of "Sordello"?

Are any of Browning's poems allegories in the same way that Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" is, or that Spenser's "Faerie Queene" is?

What is the difference between allegory and symbolism? And how does Browning's work illustrate any difference?

Does the poet's work supply proof that his imagery, on account of its adaptability to his characters, and also on account of its allusional and symbolistic qualities, is richer, more varied and complex than is, at first, obvious, when the same simple use of imagery is looked for which less original or less dramatic modern poets employ?



Does Browning show a lack of ability to invent striking imagery of the sort that is only incidentally ornamental, applicable to a fractional part of his poem, or to a sudden picture occurring in the midst of a passage? For example, such touches as "The wroth sea-waves edged with foam, white as the bitten lips of hate," "The herded pines commune and have deep thoughts" ("Paracelsus"); "Was it speech half-asleep or song half-awake"? "A ridge of short, sharp broken hills like an old lion's cheek-teeth" ("The Flight of the Duchess"); "The sprinkled isles, lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea, and laugh their pride when the light wave lisps 'Greece'" ("Cleon"); "The finger of God, a flash of the will that can" ("Abt Vogler"); "Pouring Heaven into this shut house of life" ("Transcendentalism"); "To learn not only by a comet's rush, but a rose's birth, — not by the grandeur, God, — but the comfort, Christ" ("The Ring and the Book"); "Profound purple of noon oppression, light wile o' the west wind" ("Jochanan Hakkadosh"); "Morn is breaking there. The granite ridge pricks through the mist, turns gold as wrong turns right. O laughter manifold of ocean's ripple at dull earth's despair!" ("Parleyings: Gerard de Lairese"); "Under be-friending trees, when shy buds venture out," "Amid whirl and roar of the elemental flame which star-flecks heaven's dark floor" ("Reverie").

Are such passages unusual and peculiar to the early poems, or are they, like these examples, scattered throughout the whole range of Browning's work?

Does scientific imagery play an important part in Browning's poetry? Is it correctly used? Is it often transformed to suit his own purposes? For examples,

note the metaphor of the polarization of light in the "angled spar" in "My Star;" "Once I saw a chemist take a pinch of powder," in the lyric in "Fehrishtah's Fancies"; the image of the light rays of the color spectrum in "Numpholeptos," etc.

Is Browning's imagery largely drawn from the cosmic, out-door side of life, or is it mainly derived from the human side?

III. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Artistic Theme and Mood.

*General Suggestions.* — The General Introduction of the present volume classifies Browning's subject-matter; and the first paper in the series of "Annals of a Quiet Browning Club," on "Choice of Subject-Matter in Poets," considers characteristics of Browning's subject-matter in comparison with Chaucer's, Spenser's, and Tennyson's: "Chaucer and Spenser are prototypes of two poetical tendencies that have gone on developing side by side in English literature: Chaucer, democratic, interested supremely in the personalities of men and women, representing the real, and Spenser, aristocratic, interested in imaging forth an ideal of manhood . . . Chaucer drawing his lessons out of the real actions of humanity, Spenser framing his story so that it will illustrate the moral he wishes to inculcate . . . In the present era Tennyson and Browning have represented, broadly speaking, these two tendencies . . . Even hurried survey of the field reveals the fact that Browning's range of choice in subject-matter is infinitely wider and his method of developing it far more varied than that of any other English poet.

"He seems the first to have completely shaken himself free of the trammels of classic and mediæval

literature. There are no echoes of Arthur and his knights in his poetry, the shadows of the Greek gods and goddesses exert no spell. When he deals with a classic subject . . . he does it with a critical consciousness of the fitness of the subject for his special end at the time . . . In fine, the whole range of thought and emotion is, truly speaking, the raw material of Browning's subject-matter." (*Poet-lore*, Vol. VII., pp. 356-366; see also discussion thereon, pp. 436-446.)

The fashioning of the subject-matter from a special standpoint so as to diffuse over it an atmosphere of humor is illustrated by one of the "Garden Fancies," whose very title forebodes a prank of some kind, "Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis (Vol. IV., p. 13). The subject-matter is nothing more than the burial of a pedantic book, but the creative standpoint, so to speak, from whence the theme is fashioned is shown in the attitude toward the tiresome pedant and in the gleefulness of getting the better of him, and this is more truly the subject of the poem than the incident of the burial is. As Elizabeth Barrett said of it, it has "quite the damp smell of funguses and the sense of creeping things through and through it." Yet all this is incidental to the humorous mood. The final stroke of rescuing the book from the growing pains of being stabbed through with a fungus at chapter six, and replacing it on a shelf with less lively companions, to "dry-rot at ease," is the climax of irony at the pedant's expense.

Is the humorous temper toward his subject often evident in Browning's work? What different aspects of this enjoying-from-the-outside point of view come out, for example, in "How it Strikes a Contemporary," "Confessions," "Pacchiarotto"?

Is "Up at a Villa — Down in the City" (Vol. IV., p. 44) the better or worse, as a character-sketch of an Italian's genuine feeling toward the banalities of rusticity and the cheering bustle of town-life, because of the jocular air the poet has suffused over the talk? How is this accomplished? Although as the storyteller he does not appear, is he not present, making us laugh with him?

A peculiarly odd and grim humor is imparted, similarly, in "The Heretic's Tragedy" (Vol. IV., p. 253). An atmosphere of burlesque surrounds it, although it recounts a veritable historic scene of the fourteenth century in Paris, and puts it pictorially before the eye in all its barbarous religious ferocity. But is either its historic or its pictorial quality the main thing in the poem? The note prefixed by the poet shows that it is not as an account of the burning of Jacques du Molay and an incident of the dissensions of the Church during the French dominance over the papacy, that the poem was conceived, but as a reproduction of a pious version of that event rendered in canticle-form to be sung at festivals in Flanders, some two centuries afterwards. It illustrates, then, not the French historic event, but an artistic rendering in commemoration of it marked by religious *naïveté* and the quaint, stiff loyalty belonging to Flemish art, and sounding the same note in literary form which is familiar to most of us in the pictures of Memling, and others of the early church painters. Aside from the light the poet's prefatory hint sheds upon his design, is it not evident, in the poem, that not direct narration or picturesqueness is aimed at, but the indirect presentation of an event become traditional, conventionally artistic, and almost hallowed through the partisanship of zeal-

ous and credulous minds? Do not the inconsistencies to the modern eye, of burning a man for the heresy of holding that God was good and merciful, in order to re-establish the contrary "infinitudes" of God's justice and menace, come out more humorously for the indirect structure of the poem? Does not the grotesque art of the canticle — through its refrains having a double meaning, and its figures of the burning martyr offered as a rose of hell to the rose of Sharon, conveying both the sardonic absurdity it all is to modern thought and the palpable, much-relished hit it all was to the mediæval mind — have everything to do with giving the piece its peculiar atmosphere of humor?

Is this double-edged quality, through which any objective event is set in the light of contrasting human moods or points of view, the secret of Browning's sympathetic humor?

IV. *Topic for Paper, Classwork, or Private Study.* — Design and Harmony.

*Queries for Investigation and Discussion.* — The treatment of "The Ring and the Book," the dramas, the larger poems, "The Inn Album," "Sordello," etc., as to motive and artistic effect, in this volume and in the *Camberwell* Introductions, will assist in pointing out with reference to these works what is meant by harmonizing all the parts of a play or poem to accord with its main motive; when the component parts of a work are manipulated constantly and consistently from beginning to end to suit a synthetic idea, all the lesser matters of poetic workmanship, rhyme, rhythm, diction, imagery, even subject-matter, also sink into this general trend, while contributing each a due share toward the mutual harmony.

Are Browning's design and harmony very often so

inclusive of smaller effects that are frequently in other poets ends in themselves, that his work is censured for traits that assume special meaning and beauty when they are understood as appropriately subordinated to the general plan?

Is this subordination of the various constituents of a poem to an inclusive design characteristic of all Browning's larger works?

Does it distinguish many of his shorter poems, as "Childe Roland," "Development," "Imperante Augusto natus est," and many other of the poems typical of special periods of historic life?

Is the social or historic and always evolutionary motive which underlies all the details and determines the modelling of so many of his poems a new and original factor in the creation of poetry, and alone enough to signalize Browning's genius?

Does this gift of creative design and harmony manifest itself in his earlier work, and in his later work give evidence of falling off, or of deepening in capacity to effect its will upon subtler material?

In surveying the general scope of his work from first to last with reference to artistic power, facility and variety of effectiveness in the dramatic, narrative, and lyrical modes characteristic of him, do you find that those who consider his later work to be less artistic than his first are right, or that they exhibit an inability to understand what his characteristics as an artist are, and a lack of sufficient knowledge of the material they pronounce upon?

Does observation of the work of Browning on the side of his artistry, in all the respects here suggested, go to prove him to be an irregular genius crude and careless in artistic workmanship, or a genius whose

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originality was exerted equally in shaping varied and appropriate artistic outlets for his creative spirit and in pouring it forth ?

Does Browning himself give the sufficient clew to the characteristic quality of his subject-matter and the art that sets it forth in his Epilogue to “Pacchiarotto” ?

“Marr’s thoughts and loves and hates !

Earth is my vineyard, these grew there :

From grape of the ground, I made or marred

My vintage.”



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